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In Memory of
KENNETH M. HOOE

THE
VILLAGE TRAGEDY
AND
OTHER SERMONS

BY
CLOVIS G. CHAPPELL, D.D.



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DEDICATION

*To the congregation of the Mount Vernon Place Methodist Episcopal
Church, South, to whom these sermons were preached,
this volume is affectionately dedicated*

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INTRODUCTION

Isocrates, the Athenian orator and teacher of rhetoric, tells us that there are three things which enter into the composition of a convincing public speaker—"Nature, discipline, experience. Of these natural aptitude is by far the most important; experience ranks next; instruction is of least moment; for without one, at least, of the other qualifications it can do little."

If the speaker is a Christian preacher another element cannot be ignored—spiritual power, a matter of supremest importance. Paul, the intellectual giant of the New Testament writers and the elaborator of the doctrinal system of Christianity from the principles enunciated by the Master, said: "My speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but with demonstration of the Spirit and with power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." Arthur, in the "Tongue of Fire," a little book that should be read and reread by every young preacher, makes this comment on Paul's words: "Here we see the most gifted of the Apostles clearly recognizing the fact, that his success as an ambassador to sinful men lay not in the perfection of his mental perceptions, nor in the mode in which he presented the truth to the view of those whom he addressed, but in a spiritual element of his preaching, as distinct from its intellectual characteristics as they were from its physical elocution."

The highest form of human speech is preaching. It is the divinely ordained means for the conviction, conversion and sanctification of a lost and ruined world. The Holy Spirit uses it as a vehicle for reaching and quickening the hearts of men and transforming their lives.

It is an institution that is peculiar to revealed religion. Vinet well says that no pagan religion ever provided for the regular assembling of the people for exhortation and instruction on moral and spiritual themes. Judaism had something like it in the time of the prophets and later when its official leaders imparted instruction. But Judaism was a true religion which became the foundation of Christianity.

The next best thing to hearing great sermons is reading them. The art of printing has preserved for us the master sermons of the ages. Though shorn of the personality of the preacher and isolated from the atmosphere in which they were delivered, they speak from the printed page with the tongue of inspiration to the spiritual minded reader, and bring a message warm from the heart of God.

This volume of sermons is a contribution to the world's religious literature. They are characterized by simplicity of style, clearness of expression, beauty of diction and strength of thought; they are marked by evangelical spirit and Scriptural soundness. Science, logic, rhetoric, poetry, illustration and flights of fancy are woven into sermonic structures that convince the intellect, profoundly stir the emotions and move the will to action. These sermons are on living themes and throb in sympathy with the heartbeats of earth's suffering and thrill in harmony with the angelic minstrelsy

of the skies. Their author, Dr. Clovis G. Chappell, though one of the younger prophets of Southern Methodism, has already attained the distinction of being a great pulpit orator. His pulpit utterances, under the influence of the Divine Spirit, have attracted and edified great congregations and have brought multitudes into the Kingdom of God. His notable work at the Representative Church in Washington is a monument to his consecrated genius.

This volume embodying the ripe fruits of his intellect and heart should have a place in thousands of homes.

CARLTON D. HARRIS.

THE VILLAGE TRAGEDY

JOHN, 11:14

“Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.” For most of us that is the last word. There is nothing else to be said. The worst possible has already happened. The grimmest of all grim tragedies has already been enacted. Lazarus is dead—the nurse may now go home. The physician, faithful to the last, may return to his office. Medicines, poultices, ministering hands are no longer needed. Disease has done its grim work—Lazarus is dead.

What an old tragedy this is, how commonplace. When the hearse passed you on the street yesterday you hardly turned your head. It is soon forgotten. It is so usual. It is so ordinary. And yet how new is this tragedy. How it comes to you with a freshness of pain and heartache and despair as if you were the first and only one that had ever looked into the glazed eyes of somebody you loved.

Remember it was just that new to Martha and Mary. There had not been a happier home in the little village of Bethany than theirs. They had that which above all else makes for happiness—they had love one for the other. Lazarus and Martha and Mary loved each other. Then they had love for Jesus. And that forms a sure basis for a happy home. There is no other foundation like it.

But Lazarus is dead. He who was the head of the house, he who was their protector—Lazarus, the loved brother, is gone out beyond the hearing of their voices and beyond the reach of their hands. And their home from being the happiest of the village, is now the saddest and the gloomiest and the darkest and the most hopeless. The light has gone out. The sun has set. Home can never be again what it was in the good old days.

How they had loved and rejoiced in this little village home. How they had made others love and rejoice in it. How open-handed they were in their hospitality. Their home was the preacher's home. I think there was scarcely a home in the world where Jesus found so warm a welcome. I think there was no other place where He found more responsive and understanding hearts. But all has changed now. Nothing can ever be the same again—Lazarus is dead.

Just how this fatal sickness slipped upon Lazarus we do not know. We are not told how intense was his suffering. We are not told how long he lingered. But be assured of this, that from the day he was taken sick he was nursed with the tenderest care and solicitude. And many a time did the sisters say to each other, "If Jesus would only come." And there was a great dread lest death should put his ghastly foot across the door sill before their favored Guest should come again.

At last they were unable to endure the suspense and anxiety longer. They sent a messenger to Jesus. And while this messenger carried only the statement of a fact, yet that statement had in it unuttered prayers sweet with faith and wet with tears. "He whom thou lovest is sick." That was the message. That was all

they said. That was all they felt there was any need to say. They did not tell Jesus what to do. They did not bid Him hurry to the bedside of His friend. They told Him the simple, sorrowful fact, "He whom thou lovest is sick."

Then followed those testing days of waiting. How many times they went to look out the window no one will ever know. How many times one of them stole through the door and down beyond the bend of the road we can only guess. But be assured of this fact, they watched and waited and hoped. But death came before He came. Then they hoped He would be there for the funeral. But they went to the grave alone and came home alone. And even yet Jesus had not come.

Now why was this tragedy allowed to take place? Why must Lazarus suffer? Why must death lay hold of him? Why must his sisters be called upon to pass through this Gethsemane? I am sure that these questions perplexed these two sisters long ago, just as they sometimes perplex ourselves and wring our own hearts.

This tragedy did not take place because of the ignorance of Jesus. They were sure of that. Fearing that He might not know, they sent a messenger to tell Him. They had to realize that Jesus knew all about it. He knew the pain of Lazarus. He knew their own anguish and bitter aching of heart. And I like to think just as He knew all about Lazarus and Martha and Mary as they went through their great trial, so He knows all about you and me. Jesus knows.

So it was not ignorance on the part of Christ that allowed this tragedy to take place. Neither was it His powerlessness. Martha and Mary were convinced of that. They felt that He could have prevented it

if He had only been there. They were somehow confident that if He had stood in the door, even mighty death could never have slipped in past Him. They were sure that His presence would have been enough. They were confident that His might was sufficient even for the defeating of the grim purpose of death.

Neither is the death of Lazarus a mark of the lack of love on the part of Jesus. That fact is made blessedly plain to us. "He whom thou lovest is sick," said the message. And many folks are sick whom Jesus loves. Do not understand me to deny for a moment the power of Jesus to heal the sick. He has that power. But mark me, He does not exercise it in every case. Many a loved saint of God is sick and will continue sick till they reach that blessed Country where the winsome Physician "waits with eternal healing in His fingers."

The fact that Lazarus sickened and suffered and died was then not a mark of the lack of love on the part of Jesus. It was rather a mark of the opposite. Will you notice this strange sentence: "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. When He had heard therefore that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was."

First we read that He loved these three. He did not love them as a family simply. He loved them as individuals. Christ's love, like our own, is a personal and individual something. He does not love men in the mass. He does not save men in the mass. He loves and seeks and saves the individual. My father and mother had quite a large family of children. But they did not love us as a group simply. They called us each by name and loved us each individually. I love to think of their love for all their children. I like

to think also of their love for me. I love to think of Christ's love for a world, but I like to say with Paul, "He loved me and gave Himself for me."

Jesus then loved these three individually, personally. Therefore He stayed away from them in the hour of their dire need. He loved them; therefore He delayed till Lazarus died and till there was the setting of a great hope in the lives of the two sisters that was like the setting of the sun. What a strange "therefore" this is! He loved them; therefore He hastened to go to their assistance—that is what we would have expected. He loved them; therefore as soon as He found they were in trouble He made haste to help. But instead we read, "He loved them; therefore He stayed away. He loved them; therefore He allowed disease to have its way with Lazarus and death to enter in unafraid."

This is a lesson we need to learn again and again, that Love sometimes sees best to let us suffer. So often we feel that ease and exemption from pain, success and prosperity—that these only are marks of God's love and of God's favor. It is an old idea that has haunted the thought of the church through the centuries. The old time Sunday school story used to have a good boy and a bad boy. And the bad boy was always getting the worst of it and the good boy was always getting the pie. But it is wrong and altogether wrong. Many wicked men prosper. Many good men go to the wall and fail. But this does not mean that God loves the one and does not love the other.

God loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus; therefore he will let Lazarus die. God loves you, therefore He brought to you that great disappointment. God loves you, therefore He put the hand of affliction upon

you. God loves you, therefore you were called to kneel by the coffin of your dearest and best. God loved Paul, therefore He allowed him to be afflicted with a thorn in the flesh. And it was on that grim and forbidding thorn that Paul found in after years growing the rarest and sweetest flowers.

Why then was this tragedy allowed to take place? It was because Christ loved these people. It was because He loves us. And loving them and loving us, He wanted to give us a new and deeper and more wonderful knowledge of Himself. "I am glad," He said to His disciples, "that for your sakes I was not there to the intent that you might believe." He was glad because He knew that it is only through pain that life's greatest lessons are learned. He knew that the choicest souls all through the centuries are the souls that have suffered.

Do you remember Gwen in "The Sky Pilot," that charming little story by Ralph Connor? She was a wild, willful thing, loving above all else the great out-of-doors, the plain and the deep, cool canyons. A wonderful rider she was, and her pony brought this loved world within her daily enjoyment. But it came to pass that her pony fell with her. She was caught under him and so badly crippled that she could never ride again. And now up in the little cabin at the head of the canyon she was lying day after day, bitter, raving, rebellious, fretting her life away.

One day the Sky Pilot came to see her. And he was brave enough to tell her the story of the canyons. He told her how that the Master of the prairie one day walked out over the plains, and though He found many lovely flowers, He missed the ones that He loved best. He then sent the birds and the winds to plant these

flowers. But they had no sooner sprung up than they withered away. At last in seeming anger the Master sent a thunderbolt and cleft the prairie to the heart. For a long time it groaned with the pain of its black wound. Then the birds and the winds again scattered the seeds of the flowers that the Master loved best. And the fairest flowers to be found in all the land were those that grew in the canyon, the once ugly wound. And a cool sweet place it was with all its shades and songs and silences.

And now Gwen's eyes were opened and her heart as well. She was no longer rebellious. She became strangely sweet and strangely patient and tender, for into her wounded life the King had come. And He planted in her soul garden the flowers that He loves the best. There were love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness and goodness. And while these flowers bloom in every heart in which the King is gardener, yet it does seem that they grow in their richest profusion in the garden of those hearts that have been wounded and broken.

What did Jesus teach these tearful women years ago? And what does He teach us through their great sorrow? First, He teaches us that the fact that we suffer, that the fact that our hearts ache and break sometimes—does not necessarily mean that He Himself is absent. Martha and Mary felt that if Jesus had only been there this could never have happened. But in reality He was there. Nothing had taken place without His knowledge. Nothing had taken place without His will. All the while that death was doing its grim work Jesus was there, "closer than breathing and nearer than hands and feet."

I know that there is suffering that comes because of the absence of Jesus. "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died morally"—many a man can say that who has been unfaithful to his brother. "Lord, if thou hadst been here my son had not died morally"—many a father can say that over whose ragged and unfaithful life his boy has stumbled out into a life of death in trespasses and in sin. If Christ had been in your home your children would not be the heartache that they are today. If Christ had been in your home it would not be the wreck it is today. How many men and women there are who are separated and whose children are robbed of the privileges of a complete home because of sin. Jesus was not there—that is the reason you let lust put its grim handcuffs upon you. Jesus was not there—that is the reason you made a hell out of your humble little home. Yes, many a broken heart may say, "If thou hadst been here this tragedy would never have taken place." But this was not the case with Martha and Mary. They learned, and we learn, that Jesus may be very near to us even though we suffer, even though our hearts ache and bleed and break.

They learned, in the second place, the wonderful lesson of the sympathy of Jesus. This chapter holds in its hands one of the sweetest sentences ever penned, "Jesus wept." How human He was, how tender, how sympathetic. The thorn crown, the agonies of the cross could not make Him weep, but He wept at the sorrows of those who loved Him.

What a blessed something is sympathy. There is enough in a look, in a handshake, in a smile sometimes to keep our hopes from dying and our hearts from breaking. How much all of us owe to the sympathy that has

been given us along the way. But the most real thing in the world is the sympathy of Jesus. In all our afflictions He is afflicted. And there is never a darkened home but that Jesus is there. And there is never a broken heart and never an open grave but that Christ is there. In patience He waits to be recognized. He longs to extend His sympathy. He yearns to "kiss our tears into jewels" and change our night into marvelous day.

Then, last of all, there came to these, as there comes to ourselves today, a new and satisfying assurance of the reality of the after life. Christ lets us know here, first of all, that the after life is a present fact. You remember how He said to Martha, "Thy brother shall rise again." But she had heard that encouragement again and again from the Jews till she had grown tired. And there is disappointment that amounts almost to impatience in her answer, "I know he shall rise again at the resurrection at the last day." But what she means to say is, "But Master, that is so far off. That is so mysterious, so uncertain, so dim and distant in the haze of the eternities."

Will you note the answer that Christ makes: "I am the resurrection and the life. I am not distant. I am not future. I am here. I am an eternal, present fact." So life, eternal life, is an abidingly present reality. "To be absent from the body," as Paul tells us, "is to be present with the Lord." The dead live now, not "shall live by and by." Our God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Therefore Abraham and Isaac and Jacob still live. For God, Christ tells us, is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

Then Christ not only teaches us that the after life is

a present fact, but He teaches us also the survival of individuality in that after life. When He stands by the grave to raise Lazarus from the dead, He does not call him by some new name. He called him by the name by which He had known him in this life. And those that have passed into that larger life "still answer to their old names." Elijah is still Elijah as he comes on the Mount of Transfiguration, though he has been dead for centuries. And Moses is still Moses. And do not doubt that those that you love still answer to their old names in God's house.

There is a story of how a beautiful Saracen girl fell in love with one of the Crusaders who had gone into Palestine to deliver the Holy Sepulcher. He was unable to take her back to England with him, so in after days she made the long journey alone. At last she reached London. She knew not one word of English. She only knew the name of the man she loved, and she went through London's streets calling that name. And she did not call in vain. The glad moment came when her knight answered and took her to his heart. And so you and I one day shall call familiar names in that other "City whose builder and maker is God," and familiar faces shall answer to those old names.

And Jesus not only teaches the present tense of this that we call the after life, He not only teaches the survival of personality—He teaches also the survival of love. He teaches the survival of the sweet old relationships that have made life the blessed and fascinating experience that it is in the here and now. When He speaks of Lazarus, as another has pointed out, He says, "Our friend Lazarus." Yes, on the other side of the River Lazarus is still a friend to Jesus, and Jesus is

still a friend to Lazarus. Death can kill a body but it can not kill love. When He speaks to Martha He says, "Thy brother." Lazarus had slipped out of the old home. Lazarus's body was decaying in the tomb, but Lazarus was not dead. He was still living. He was still the brother of Martha and of Mary. They were still his sisters. And that sweet relationship was beyond the reach of the destroying hand of death.

How many hungry hearts have asked this question: "Shall we know each other there?" On the authority of my Lord I feel justified in saying there is not the slightest doubt of it. There is certainly not in my own mind. And you are justified in saying "My baby" not simply of the one that is still in your home, but also of that one who has toddled out of your home into that other Home not made with hands. You have a right still to speak of those who have gone on before as "My husband" and "My wife" and "My friend" and "My boy." These that have died in the knowledge of Jesus are still ours. And one day God will give them back to us with our old loves cleansed and purified in the Land of Eternal Gladness.

Heart, I wonder today if this faith is your faith. I wonder if this Christ who is present no less in our sorrows than in our joys, I wonder if this Christ who sympathizes, this mighty Christ who flings open the door of the Life Eternal to us—is your Christ. If He is, I am sure that you consider no price too great to have paid to have come so to know Him. You may have come to this glad knowledge through heartache, as did these people years ago. But if you did, I am sure that you have come to recognize, as did Martha and Mary and Lazarus, that their darkest day was also

their brightest and sweetest and best. Our Lord does not deal with all of us alike, but His purpose for all is this same high and holy purpose, that we may come to know Him. This is the end He has in view in all our laughter and all our tears. If He can only get us to lay hold on His Hand He knows that that will mean Life Eternal here and Life Eternal yonder in His presence, with those "that we have loved long since and lost a while."

THEN WHAT!

ACTS, 4: 31

“When they had prayed”—what happened then? What took place? Were any beneficent changes wrought? Did any glorious results follow? Were the skies as black with night as they were before, or did they begin to be streaked by the hopeful fingers of the dawn? Was the earth still barren and drought-parched, or was there a blessed baptism of rain with the upspringing of varied and colorful life? What happened? Did wintertime remain, or was there a breath of warmth that made the icicles drop from the eaves of the houses, and the bare boughs of the trees to wave their verdant branches?

“When they had prayed”—if nothing took place, then I would not wonder if these early Christians ceased to pray. If no beneficent results followed, I am frank to believe that these practical men relegated prayer to the background as a useless expenditure of time. If nothing takes place today when men pray, of course it is not to be wondered at that so few really do pray. This is a busy age. We are hurried. We are cumbered with much serving. If prayer does not help, if prayer does not bring results—of course it is not to be expected that we be men and women of prayer.

But prayer brought results then. Prayer brings results still. “When they had prayed”—that is when

the great moral revolutions were wrought in the life of the individual and of the world. That is the hour when new eras were born. That is the hour when all the great revivals started. "When they had prayed"—that is when all the great missionary movements looking toward the ultimate conquest of the world were launched. That is the date when empires were lifted off their hinges. That is the time when the church became "as fair as the moon, bright as the sun and terrible as an army with banners." "When they had prayed"—that is when the great deliverances were wrought and God showed Himself mighty in the overthrow of His enemies.

Do you remember that bit of history of the chosen people? The messenger of Sennacherib has come to taunt the weak people of God. He offers to give them two thousand horses if they are able to set riders upon them. They know that they have no resources in men or in money. A little later there comes a letter warning the King Hezekiah not to let God deceive him with the promise that Jerusalem shall be delivered. "Did the gods of other nations deliver them?" he asked tauntingly.

When Hezekiah received the letter the story says that he went into the Temple and spread it before the Lord as if to say, "Lord, look what this boastful and arrogant king has written to me. Look how he has insulted thine own self."

And then God's answer came through the prophet Isaiah saying, "Because thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib, King of Assyria, this is the word which the Lord hath spoken concerning him, The virgin, the daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed

thee to scorn. . . . Therefore will I put my hook in thy nose and my bridle in thy mouth, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest." And so—

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen;
Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn has blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and forever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
And through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow and the rust on his mail,
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances uplifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

And this happened "when they had prayed."

"When they had prayed"—this, I say, is the greatest

date in human history. That is the time when the wonderful things have taken place that only God can bring about in answer to prayer. When these men prayed something really did happen. The story related in the context is not a theory of what might have happened; it is a record of what really did happen. I am going to ask you to look at these facts, not in the exact order as here related, but to look at them and to bear in mind, as you look, that the same results will follow that same kind of praying today.

"When they had prayed they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." These men were filled with the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer. His personal presence was needed in order to enable them to meet the stern demands that were upon them. This same Spirit of Power is needed by the church today. It is not simply one need of the church. It is the supreme need. We have been forced to realize again and again that "It is not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." The knowledge has been forced upon us that "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing."

There are those today who hail with joy the growing interest in spiritism. Whether men do actually commune with the spirits of the departed, I do not know. The fact has not yet been proven to my satisfaction. But whether it is true or not true seems to me to be of no great importance. My biggest need is not for communion with the spirit of somebody who has died. My supreme need is for communion with the Almighty and living God.

Now, we might as well face the fact that the Church of Jesus Christ today is not claiming her spiritual

birthright as she ought to claim it. I am sure that if St. Paul were to come into most of our churches today he would ask the same question that he asked of the little congregation at Ephesus years ago. You remember how Paul came to worship with the little church of twelve that had separated themselves from the seething tide of wordliness in that great and wicked city. But when he came into the service he found something lacking. There was, one tells us, a want of glow, a want of enthusiasm, a want of thoroughgoing optimism. And this skilled Physician of Souls asked this question: "Did you receive the Holy Ghost when you believed?" And their reply was the sad confession that they did not even know that the Holy Spirit had been given. But the service did not close till they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

Many of us are just where they were, and their need is our need. We are not the spiritual power that we might be and that we ought to be. That is one reason, I am sure, why so many strange doctrines have been able to make such progress in the world today. This I say, not excusing these false doctrines. But men have left our altars oftentimes because the fire had gone out upon them. And just as it is true that there is nothing so fascinating as a church alive with the Spirit of God, there is nothing more depressing than a dead church.

"They were filled with the Holy Spirit." That is our need. We can not do our work without Him. The task is too difficult. We are called upon to do the impossible. It is easy enough to organize and to preach and to sing, but we must "change the spots of the leopard, and give the Ethiopian a new skin." We must go among the dry bones of the valley, and out of that

death-shattered material, organize an Army for the King Eternal. Hence, we must be spiritual men.

And spiritual men we may be. There was a time when the baptism of the Spirit was for the few. There was a time when this blessed Sunlight gilded only the loftiest mountain peaks of our humanity. But today "This promise is unto you and to your children and to them that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Today the Light is ready to spill its glory upon the smallest hillock and the most insignificant blade of grass. For "Upon my servants and upon my handmaidens will I pour out in that day of my Spirit, saith the Lord."

"When they had prayed they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." This is our need. This is our privilege, and the way to its realization is the way taken by these men long ago. For "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." This power is waiting to come upon the church and the individual today as it came then, in answer to prayer.

The second result that followed when they had prayed was that "they spake the Word with boldness." That is, prayer brought to them a new courage. Prayer will bring that same result still. Do you need more courage? Do you ever get surprised and pained at your own cowardice, at your own lack of boldness? I am sure I have been ashamed of my own timidity, of my own weakness and cowardice many times. I am sure that you could tell the same story.

I am likewise as sure of another fact, and that is that

I have received new courage as a result of prayer. I have faced situations with fear and shrinking. I have faced tasks that seemed to me utterly beyond me. But as I have prayed I have found myself in the midst of these tasks with a courage and with an assurance that was even a surprise to my own heart. I am sure hundreds of you have passed through a like experience.

Prayer does make for courage. I wonder what the little servant girl who saw Peter frightened into lying would have thought if she had seen him a few weeks later. In the Garden, you know, he slept when he should have prayed, and the crisis found him a coward. Later on he learned the secret of prayer and he stands before his enemies calmly courageous, saying, "Whether it is right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. We can not but speak the things that we have seen and heard."

It was when he had prayed that Luther found courage to defy all the enemies of his Lord in obedience to his convictions. It was when they had prayed that men have found courage to make trails into the wilderness, to cross unknown seas, to leave their bones to whiten under all suns and upon the shores of all continents.

Here is a martyr standing by the stake. Fagots are going to be lighted in a moment that will burn him to death. And with a calmness and courage utterly bewildering to those who stand by, he says to his executioner, "Feel my pulse and see if they are not calmer than yours." How did he come by this courage? It is a courage born of prayer. It is said that the personal presence of Julius Caesar made every common soldier into a hero. Whether this is true or not I do not know,

but I do know that the personal presence of Jesus Christ, keenly realized in answer to prayer, will make every man into a hero.

The third result that followed when they had prayed was that they were "of one heart and of one soul." They became a really united people. Two men can not kneel together before a common God without coming closer to each other. Real prayer makes jealousies and bickerings and strife and hatred impossibilities.

Did you ever see a church that was torn into shreds because of hatreds and misunderstandings among its own membership? I have. That is when the devil takes a vacation so far as that church is concerned. He is no longer needed there. It is like the story we read of Cadmus.

Cadmus went once, you remember, and slew a dragon. He then pulled out all that dragon's teeth and walked through a field and sowed them broadcast. When he reached the far side of the field and looked back he saw to his amazement that every seed had sprouted and grown up into an armed giant. He knew not what to do. But seeing how ill natured they looked, he picked up a pebble and hit one grouchy looking fellow upon the ear. Upon that, the man who had been hit blamed his neighbor. They fell to fighting and their fellows joined in, and each man killed his neighbor. And Cadmus had nothing to do but to stand with his thumbs in his vest holes and look on.

I have seen that same thing happen in the church. I was in a community some years ago trying to hold a revival. Day after day I preached in that ecclesiastical refrigerator without results. At last I demanded to know what was wrong. They told me that certain

leading members did not speak to each other and that some of them did not even speak to the pastor.

The following sermon I used very plain speech, though I trust loving speech at the same time. The result was that the leader in this business of hate invited me home with him. I told him I would come if he would let me bring his pastor. He did not speak to his pastor at that time. He hesitated. I told him further that I would not come unless I could bring the pastor. He consented.

When we reached this home we found other parties to the quarrel. I got them together and they started to tell how it was not their fault, and I said, "Let us pray." And they found it hard to say to God what they had set out to say to me. Instead, when I called on the leader to pray, he burst into tears, confessed his sin and the others followed, and a new era was born in that community.

Prayer makes for unity in the local congregation and throughout the world. "When they had prayed they were of one heart." They could hurl themselves like a projectile into the task before them. They were helping to make possible the dearest desire of Jesus expressed in His high priestly prayer, "that they may be one." We need this unity today, not only in our local churches, but throughout Christendom. And it is a unity that will only take place when we have prayed.

The fourth result that followed when they had prayed was that "No man said that aught that he possessed was his own." That is, there came to these men a sense of stewardship. They did not claim to belong to themselves. They did not claim that their possessions were their own. They realized that they were bought

with a price. They realized that all they had, their lands, their houses, their money, all was to be put at the disposal of their Lord.

This sense of stewardship is needed in every congregation and by every Christian today. Some, I am happy to say, already have it, but many do not. There are still thousands of Christians who cling to an idea of ownership that is absolutely heathenish and diametrically opposed to Christianity. "When they had prayed no man said aught that he possessed was his own." That is a realization that ought to come to every Christian throughout the wide world. It is not a conviction that is merely optional. It is a conviction that is an absolute necessity if we are to be the men and women that God wants us to be. When the church realizes God's absolute ownership of all that they are and all they possess, when they acknowledge that ownership by the putting of at least a tenth upon His altar and the other nine-tenths at His disposal, when that good day comes, I am convinced that the final coming of the Kingdom will be almost at hand. And we are to hasten this good day by prayer. For a sense of stewardship came to these, as it will come to ourselves, "when they had prayed."

The fifth result that followed when they had prayed was that "Great grace was upon them." That is, I take it, that they became winsome Christians, fascinating, attractive Christians. I believe you will agree with me that that is a something that is much needed today. I am sure that the cause of our Lord has suffered no little from those who have been hideously and horribly religious. For believe me, there is a type of religion in the presence of which you want to "gnaw

a file and flee into the wilderness." These men became gracious. "The beauty of the Lord rested upon them." And I think I have never met a vitally spiritual man or woman who was not attractive. I think I have never known one single one who really knew how to pray who was not winsome and fascinating.

How attractive was our Lord! Mothers found it hard to hold their own children when He was by. I can see Him as they climb out of their mothers' arms to go and climb into His and kiss Him on the lips and cling to Him till the disciples are horrified and try to keep them back. And Christ has to say, "Never mind. Let the children come and forbid them not, for the Kingdom of Heaven is full of them. I am used to them. I have millions of them in the House where I came from. So let them come. They do not worry me." And they came because He was so attractive.

And there was that man Paul. From what tradition tells us, he was not anything wonderful to look at. A bit of a hunchback, maybe, with weak eyes, and yet sobs come to us this morning across the centuries. And as we look back we see a group of men and women clinging to him on that distant seashore. They can not leave off hugging him and kissing him. "And they all wept sore and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words that he spake, that they should see his face no more." Prayer will bring a new winsomeness. I am sure of it. I am sure, too, that we need that grace, every one of us.

A friend of mine told me of standing on the street corner in a certain city a few years ago talking to a friend of his who was a musician. While they were talking an organ grinder came close with a grindorgan

and monkey and began to play. He said, "I saw my friend getting restless and I wanted to see how long I could make him stand it. At last he broke away and dashed up the street, saying, 'That organ will run me crazy.' And I tried to detain him telling him that he ought not to run, that the Italian was playing one of Händel's masterpieces. But he went in spite of me."

"Then," he said, "a few weeks later we were together at the opera house and one of the greatest orchestras in the world was playing. And at the close of a certain selection I saw my friend standing on his feet in the chair frantically waving his program in one hand and his hat in the other. And I got him by his coat and gave him a jerk and said, 'Sit down, you will make a fool of yourself.' He said, 'Let me alone. This is one of Händel's masterpieces, one of the greatest pieces of music ever written.'"

And the strange part of it all was that the piece that the great orchestra had just played, that had set the man wild with enthusiasm, was the very same piece that the organ grinder had been grinding out on his hand organ, the same piece and yet rendered so wonderfully different. And there is a world of difference between the grand symphony of our Christian religion lived out prayerlessly in the energy of the flesh and lived out prayerfully in the energy of the Holy Ghost.

And last of all, "When they had prayed the place was shaken where they were assembled." The city was shaken, and finally the world was shaken. Prayer shakes things. Yonder are two men in a Roman prison. Their feet are fast in the stocks, but at mid-night they prayed, and when they had prayed the place was shaken. God took the prison in His hand and shook it as a dicer

might shake his dice box and its doors flew open and every man's fetters fell off from his hands.

Prayer has just that power still. It looses the might of God. Some years ago I was in a community to hold a series of meetings. The church was torn into shreds. The people seemed to be utterly without hope of any beneficent results. But I had invited a saintly old farmer friend of mine to stay in my home during those days. He was not a preacher. He was not a scholar, but he was greatly learned in the things of God and he knew how to pray.

One night after the meeting had been going on ten days without any results, he met me as I came down the aisle and took me by the hand and said, "Say what the Lord tells you to say tonight. I have had a vision. Something is going to happen." I preached that night and every single man, woman and child that was in that crowded audience that was outside the church was brought to a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. And many of those who had grown cold were brought closer to God. When this man prayed the place was shaken.

Now, remember these glorious results came in answer to prayer. They come still in answer to prayer. And mark me, they come in no other way. The enemy is perfectly willing that we shall have the best church building in the city and the best preaching in the city and the best singing in the city and the most skillful organizing in the city, if we will only leave off the might of God that comes only in answer to prayer.

THE CALL OF CALAMITY.

JOSHUA, 1:2

Hear the text: "Moses, my servant, is dead. Now therefore rise and go over this Jordan." The text tells us of a terrible calamity—Moses is dead. We hear the word with a sinking of the heart. Moses—we could have spared anyone better than him. He was worth any dozen men, any hundred men. He was worth any thousand men. The soldiers of Napoleon used to call him Old Two Hundred Thousand. They did so because they regarded him as worth two hundred thousand ordinary men. And Moses was Israel's Napoleon. He was their leader. He seemed the one man of all the vast multitudes that could not possibly be spared.

And yet we read, "Moses is dead." Why, he was the man who began the great enterprise of emancipation. He it was who had seen the burning bush in the wilderness. He it was who had heard God's call to deliver his people. He it was who had gone, a lone old man, to invade Egypt with only his staff in his hand and God in his heart. He it was who had fought with the hard-hearted king and had won, and had led forth Israel from slavery.

And when they were upon the borders of the Red Sea and the Egyptians were behind them and the waters were before them, it was Moses who had smitten the waters. It was he who under God had made a path

for their feet. It was he who had led them safe to the other side. When they were parching with thirst in the wilderness it was Moses who had smitten the rock and had changed it into a gushing spring. When they had fought the enemy it was the uplifted hands of Moses that brought them victory.

Yes, Moses had been everything to them. When he was gone for forty days they said, "Make us gods to go before us, for as for this Moses, we know not what is become of him." And they meant by that that Moses had stood to them in the place of God. He had carried them upon his broad shoulders for almost half a century. And his passing from them was a loss so keen that to their childish minds it seemed like the loss of God Himself.

But however reluctant we are to admit it, however bitter the loss, how seemingly disastrous the calamity, the fact remains—Moses is dead. Now, facts are to be faced. We are not to shut our eyes to them. We are to look at them squarely and shape our conduct accordingly. "Moses is dead, now therefore"—says God. "Now therefore"—Now therefore what? What is to be the attitude of Joshua, Moses' servant to this loss? What is to be the attitude of Israel?

They might have assumed an attitude of hopelessness and despair. It would have been altogether natural. "Moses is dead." He was our leader. He was the one to whom we looked to bring us into Canaan. He did not live to accomplish his task. There came to him the stern command, "Get thee up into the mountains and die." And he left the task unfinished. The last chapter of his book was never written. The last touch was never given to his great masterpiece. His

great heart failed, and his life went out just before he reached the goal.

"Moses is dead." He died without reaching Canaan. If he could not bring us into that land there is no use for anybody else to try. There is no other man among us as great as Moses. There is none other gifted with his patience, with his faith, with his daring, with his genius. He is dead; therefore let us quit. Let us give it up. Let us turn back to Egypt.

That is the attitude we assume in the presence of the dead Moses of our lives so often. We meet one great defeat. We are wounded by one great sorrow. We sob by the coffin of one dead Moses and we say, "Life can never be worth while again. There can never be any hope for us any more." And we sit down and sob and wait for the end. I knew a mother sometime ago who lost her only daughter. An active, earnest woman she was, but after this great sorrow she seemed to give up her interest in the community. She gave up her enthusiasm for the Church. She seemed in large measure to lose her interest in the loved ones that remained in her home. And she sat down and nursed her sorrow till her heart broke. Now, that is one way to treat our dead Moses, but that is not the best way, and that is not God's way for us.

These people might have rebelled, as they did so often, and become morose and bitter. They might have blamed God for taking Moses from them, just as you sometimes blame Him for the loss of some Moses that slips out of your life. A lost sorrow is a pathetic something. For Moses to die in vain is tragic indeed, and yet it happens again and again. I knew a woman once

who was disappointed in a love affair. For her Moses died, and she became bitter and cynical and at last she threw herself utterly away.

God's way is best. What is His call? What is His blessed invitation? "Moses, my servant is dead; now therefore rise and go." Since he is gone you will be all the more needed. Since he no longer works, your work is the more necessary. Let the vacancy that he left be an invitation to you to fill it. "Moses is dead," says the faint-hearted coward, "I will quit. We will never get anywhere without Moses." "Moses is dead," says the heroic Joshua, "I must take on new burdens. I must assume new responsibilities. I must fight much harder, because Moses is dead."

That was God's plan then. It is God's plan now. "Therefore rise and go." Go because God has to have some man to lead. There are many things that God can do without you and me. He can run the weather without us, as one has pointed out, though many of us do not think He can. We have to dabble in weather. We would run it if we could. Not being able to do that, we complain about it. But God can run the weather nicely without us. He does not need us there at all. Of course we need the weather ourselves as a topic of conversation, but we need not work at the job of making it.

God can manage the seasons and the suns and the stars without us. But there is one something He can not do without us—He can not save this world without us. And that is an undertaking that lies close to His heart. When He wants to change water into wine, when He wants to bring about a reformation, when He

wants to revive a dead religion, when He wants to change a moral graveyard into a parade ground for the King's Army—He must have men to do this.

But while God works through men, we need to remember that no one man is essential to the success of His enterprise. God can take His workmen home to Heaven and still carry on His work. It is a good thing for us to face that fact again and again, for we are prone, all of us, to think that the coming of the Kingdom depends upon this individual and that individual. We do not believe Canaan can ever be won without Moses. We fancy that he is to give it to us, when God keeps telling us that He Himself is the Giver. We believe with the young prophets of Jericho, that Elijah is the one necessity for the carrying on of God's plans and purposes in the world. We think what we need today is the good old preachers and the good old people of fifty years ago.

Now, these people were needed then, but they are not essential to God's purpose in the world today. No man is essential. Sometimes we see this pitiful sight. A man is a member of the church. Maybe he is an office bearer in the church. Maybe in some way his feelings are wounded. Maybe he fancies himself slighted. Maybe for some reason he ceases to be an office bearer. He becomes angry. He decides that he will at least partially wreck the institution by quitting. So he withdraws and is no longer seen in God's house.

What happens? Does the church die? No, the church does not die. The man himself dies. And in dying he helps his family to come to despise the institution that he himself once loved, and that he really

loves today, in spite of his personal anger against some individual connected with the church. Oh, my friend, if you find yourself wounded, don't let it lead you into that supreme madness of quitting. Don't become so possessed with a sense of your importance that you fancy the Church of God will be broken up because you go off and pout. You and I and a thousand others may quit this moment, and the Church of God will go on, and the redeemed will shout on, and we will discover that we are in no sense essential.

I remember when I was quite a young preacher how I used to get a church, as I thought, to running well, then I would begin to be sorry for them and wonder how in the wide world they would get along when I was no longer pastor. By and by I was moved. Then I would discover a very illuminating fact, and that was that many a time they got along better without me than they did with me.

God needs men. God must have men. But no one man is essential. The first year I was in the ministry I was moved in the middle of the year. The church to which I went did not want me. The pastor whom I followed was exceedingly popular. They felt that in loyalty to him they must be disloyal to me. Therefore the people came day after day saying, "So-and-So is going to quit this church." And I would say, "Why?" And they would say, "Because Brother So-and-So has gone and you can not carry on the work. 'Moses is dead.'" And they kept that up almost every day for about six weeks. And then one Sunday morning I said, "I am ready this morning to write the letter of every man and woman who wants to leave. I have learned something this week. I saw a man buy a

bottle of soda pop. He knocked in the cork and it began to splutter and bubble till I thought he would lose it all. But he waited, and when the spluttering was over I saw nothing had escaped but bubbles and wind. Now," I said, "you bubbles and wind that have been talking about leaving all the while, go ahead. We can get along nicely without you." And nobody left.

No, you and I are not essential. God alone is essential. Mark you, I am not saying that we are not needed. God has nothing to throw away. You and I have nothing to throw away. However rich we may be in moral worth, we have not one single day or one single hour to squander. We have not one single ounce of moral energy to throw away. Not even the big things have anything to waste. This is a big world, but it has never wasted one single drop of water or one single grain of sand or one single weed or one single flower since the morning stars sang together. That is a big sun that hangs yonder in the sky, and when it set out to draw water this morning it taxed the Seven Seas and the Amazon and the Mississippi and the Nile. But it was not too big a sun to drink from the cup of the rose, and it was not too dainty a sun to dip its golden rays into the stench of a mud hole or to wring out the dank rags of a tramp asleep in the fence corner. And even Christ Himself when He fed the multitude, ordered that the fragments be gathered up in order that nothing might be lost. The eternal God Himself has no single crust of bread, and certainly no single human soul to throw away. But while we need to remember that we are needed, we need also to realize that no single man of us is absolutely essential to the carrying on of God's

plan in the world. God, I say, alone is essential—and God abides.

Listen: "Now it came to pass after the death of Moses that the Lord spake unto Joshua." Did you notice that word? God spake even after the death of Moses. It is hard for us to believe that. It is easy for us to believe that God spoke to Moses, it is easy for us to believe that God made known His will to the men of a far-off yesterday. But what we need to realize is that God also speaks to men of today. We need to realize that God did not lose His interest in humanity with the home going of Moses. He spake long ago after the death of Moses. And after the death of every Moses God still abides and still bends low to speak into the ear that is attentive to hear.

So God not only spoke to Moses, but He also spoke to prosaic and commonplace Joshua. He spoke to the man who had occupied no higher position than that of the servant of Moses. He spoke to a man who seemed good only at taking orders. And what He said to him was this, "As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee." He told him that He was as willing to work with him as He was to work with Moses. He told him what He tells you and me, that just as He was with Moses and with Joshua and with Paul and with Wesley, so is He willing to be with us who fight our battles in the commonplace here and now.

Mark you, when God says, "As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee," He does not mean that He is going to make Joshua into a second Moses. Had God needed a Moses just at this time He would have kept the one He had. Joshua is not as big a man as Moses.

He is not so mighty. He is not so mountainlike in his greatness. Joshua will never be Moses. He can not be and does not need to be. But God is willing to honor his individuality and make him into the best possible Joshua, just as He stands willing to bring you and me to our highest and to our best.

And now because God still lives and because God still speaks and because God is willing to be to Joshua all that He was to Moses, Joshua may have the courage to go forward. But for the fact of the abiding presence and leadership of our Lord, any hope of future conquest and victory will of course be impossible. But since He abides, eternally willing and eternally eager to be to us all that He has been to the mighty saints of the past,—for this reason we should be ready to move forward when we hear Him say, “Moses, my servant is dead; now therefore rise and go over this Jordan.”

And Joshua arose and went. And he conquered and he succeeded even where Moses had failed. Joshua was not as strong a man as Moses. He was not at all like Moses. He did not try to be like him. Moses could do ten thousand things that Joshua could not do. But Joshua could do some things that Moses could not do. Joshua could do his own work in his own way as God gave him power, and that was enough. And in doing this, he won. In doing this he entered into Canaan. In doing this he made it possible for God to change loss into gain and calamity into benediction.

So you see that God does not quit when one servant of His dies. God does not quit in the face of one failure or one defeat or one fall. He invites us to go forward with Him. He invites us to mount on stepping stones of our dead selves to higher things. Through the lips

of every dead Moses He summons us to a new departure and to new efforts to conquer Canaan.

There was once a charming civilization in our Southland. There was much that was wonderfully beautiful about that civilization. But one day it died. It died amidst the blood and smoke and hell of war. And God said to those men as they turned from Appomattox to the ashes of their ruined homes, "Moses is dead. The civilization, the social fabric of yesterday is swept away; now therefore rise." And rise they did, and they gathered the salvage of hope from the wreckage of failure. And a new South was born. And we have come into a fairer Canaan than our fathers knew.

Centuries ago there came One to this world who gave Himself unreservedly to the cause of building up the Kingdom of God. And He drew about Him a few choice men and women into whom He infused a spirit like His own. But when that company was a mere handful, while the new enterprise that He launched was yet in its infancy, He himself was killed. He was dragged before Pilate, was condemned and crucified. And that hour the sun grew dark and all nature shuddered at the agony of her expiring Savior. Everything seemed lost. But God said, "Christ, my Son, is dead; rise and go." And from that skull-shaped hill of loss and death, His followers went out to the conquest of the world.

The Church is face to face today with much that is discouraging. Many an enemy must be met and conquered before the Kingdom can be brought in. We face the fact that only a little more than one-third of the people even of Christian America belong to any church. We face the further fact that of those who do

belong, a distressingly large number are Christian only in name. We are not the mighty force that we ought to be. We are not going forth conquering and to conquer as we ought to go. We are not "fair as the moon and bright as the sun and terrible as an army with banners." The enemy has made inroads and our walls in many places have been broken down.

What is to be your attitude as we face these facts? Maybe the church to which you belong is in large measure a dead church. Maybe you feel that its membership has only a form of godliness without the power. What will you do? Will you give up and quit? Or will you let the great need summon you to service? For the church to fail at its high task is a calamity. Will you not allow the calamity of that failure to call to you and make you bestir yourself to a new effort to do and dare something for the sake of our Lord?

Maybe there has come to you an individual loss. Some loved one has slipped away from you. Let your very heartache be a call to new endeavor. That is a beautiful story of David. He has a sick baby in his home. He fasts and prays that the life of the child may be spared, but his prayer is not heard. Then he learns that his child is dead, and that knowledge is a summons to him to arise. And he does arise and go forward, for this the fine word on his lips: "He can not return to me, but I can go to him."

Bunyan, the converted tinker, yearned to preach the Gospel, but he was shut up in Bedford jail. And then came God's word to him: "Moses is dead. Your liberty is dead; now therefore rise and go." And Bunyan arose and went out on a preaching tour to the centuries. He arose to go out and catch the far views

from the Delectable Mountains, and to wander in the Green Pastures and beside the Still Waters of the Land of Beulah.

There was a young fellow in the Ozark Mountains who was happily converted and purposed to enter the Christian ministry. A few weeks before he was to go away to college he was wrecked by a runaway and became a cripple for life. He had to give up his fine hope of being a preacher. For him that bright prospect was dead, but God still said to him, "Arise and go." And he went to a lowly task. He became a ferryman on the Osage River. And one man who knew him said that he could count seventy men in the Ozark Mountains who had been led to Christ through this man.

And you recall how Cromwell wanted to come to America and how he had paid his passage. But before the ship sailed Charles I. had him arrested and brought ashore. And his dream had to be given up and his Moses died. And God said to him, "Your hope of going to America and of helping to build the New World is dead. Now therefore arise and free England." And he went back from what he at first thought to be the supreme calamity of his life to receive life's finest crown.

Thus it is that God makes it possible for us to change our pains into palms, our losses into gains, our calamities into capital. And then one day death will creep upon you from out the dark. It will whisper to you and say, "Lie still and rest." And those who stand by will say, "He is dead." But God will say, "Your body is dead. Now therefore rise and go." And out into that Land of Eternal Progress you will go to climb one

Alpine height after another in the fellowship of Him who loved you and gave Himself for you.

So remember, that no failure need be final or fatal. Remember that no loss need be irremediable. Moses may die, but God lives on. And while we have hold on His hand we have hold on life and victory and eternal progress. Therefore even though Moses, God's servant, is dead, arise and go over your Jordan where the best hopes of your life are waiting to be realized.

GOD'S PLAN FOR MY LIFE

JOHN, 17:4

"I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." These are the words of Jesus as He stood at the end of the way. Life now lay behind Him. Its battles have been fought. Its victories have been won. There was before Him yet only the tragedy of Calvary, but as He had already got the consent of His own will to pass through this, He counted this victory as achieved. He is already within the shadow of the Cross. His foot is upon the threshold of death. As a mountain climber might look back from the summit of the mountain over the way along which he had struggled upward, so Jesus stops upon the height of the mountain of life and looks back.

As He looked back He was not disappointed. As He looked back He was satisfied. There were no weeds along the way that He had planted that He would like now to pluck up. There were no flowers that He might have sown along the way that were left unplanted. The book of His life's story was a finished book. He had no corrections to make, no unkind thrusts to rub out, no love words to write in. It was finished.

And by its being finished, it does not mean simply that Jesus had reached the end of His life. We all do that. In the far north a skeleton was found seated at the root of a tree, and up above his head was a carved

finger pointing to it with these words: "This is the end of the trail." And the poor dying fellow, with his goal unreached and with his ambition unrealized, had come thus far and could go no farther, and so he carved this pathetic word and sat down and died: "This is the end of the trail."

But when Christ says, "I have finished the work" He claims that the task has not simply been ended, but it has been perfected. He claims that He has lived the one flawless, the one complete, the one perfect life that this world has ever seen. That it is perfect no man will deny. It has endured the scrutiny of nineteen centuries, and the verdict of friend and foe still is that of perplexed and bewildered Pilate, "I find no fault in Him at all."

Now, what is the secret of the life of Jesus? First, it does not grow out of the fact, as some seem to believe, that Jesus was divine. Christ emptied Himself, the Apostle tells us. So when He met temptation, He met it as a man. And when He worked miracles, He worked them as a man. And when He wrought His marvelous ministry, He did it through the same spiritual power that is available for all men.

The secret of the life of Jesus is summed up in this: "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." The biography of Jesus was written in the mind and heart of God. And Jesus, by His absolute surrender to the will of God, made God's plan an actuality. In every step of His life He realized and recognized God's plan and God's leadership. Again and again He refers to His hour, meaning by that that the index finger that points to the time at which He is to act is that of no human hand, but the hand of His

Father. This was the secret of His continued enjoyment of His Father's companionship. "He that hath sent me is with me. The Father hath not left me alone, for I do always the things that please Him." The life of Jesus was God-planned, and Jesus found that plan and lived it. And that is the secret of the beauty and power of that life that has held the world in its grip all through the centuries.

But no more truly did God plan the life of Jesus Christ than He plans your life and mine. I know of no truth that is more thrilling than this, that has more power to lift us upon our feet in joyous and expectant hopefulness. We are not here by accident. We are not here as creatures of chance. We are here on a definite mission of our Father's own choosing. I know that infidelity and heathenism laugh at the idea. I know that paganism voices its unbelief in that pathetic sentence:

And fear not lest Existence closing your
Account, and mine, should know the like no more;
The Eternal Saki from that Bowl hath pour'd
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

When you and I behind the Veil are past,
Oh, but the long, long while the World shall last,
Which of our Coming and Departure heeds
As the Sea's self should heed a pebble-cast.

But God lets us know that we are not so many useless and unnoticed bubbles, but worthful human souls, each with a definite mission, each one unique. There was never another individual just like you. There never will be in all the eternities. In the springtime God

sows a million flowers and hangs a million verdant banners upon the boughs of the trees, but there are no two alike. "Whenever God makes a man He breaks the mold." Every man has his own individuality and his own special mission. God was in earnest when He made you because you can be and do something for Him that no other human soul can be and do.

Why do we say that God plans every life? In the first place, we say it because He plans everything else in this universe. No man can look open-eyed into the face of nature without realizing that back of nature, and within it, is a planning purposeful God. The very flowers tell the story in words of perfume and color. I look at the lily's magic garments. Where did it get its living dress? Not from the wardrobe of Solomon. Earth's kings have no such garments. The lily—why God clothed it. He wove its white dress out of sunbeams and dewdrops and the mysteries of the soil. And nobody can weave such garments but God.

I listen to the song of the mockingbird and the canary. Where did those birds go to school? Who taught them music? Ah, you know. Those little birds sing the songs that their Master taught them, notes caught from the Choir Invisible. Who made the calendar for the swallow? How does it know when the snows are coming? Who made his geography? Who drew the map of that far away country where the roses bloom all the year and where spring never takes vacation? Who gave him his compass and blazed the trail to these unknown summer lands? Ah, you know—

There is a power whose care
Guides thy way along that trackless coast,
The desert and the illimitable air,
Lone, wandering, but not lost.
And—He who from zone to zone guides
Through the trackless heavens thy solemn flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will guide my steps aright.

Not only does the world about us tell us the story of a planning God, but the great worlds above us have the same message. The Psalmist tells us how that one day he went to church. His pew, I suppose, was one of the Judean hills. The preacher was the heavens, and the theme of his sermon was the glory of God. He told us about it in a wonderful song that he wrote: "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork." And Addison attended that same church centuries later and wrote:

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim.
The unwearied sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land
The work of an almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly, to the listening earth,
Repeats the story of her birth;
While all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball?
What though no real voice nor sound
Amid the radiant orbs be found?
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
Forever singing as they shine,
"The hand that made us is divine."

God has millions of trains flying through the trackless distances of space, but not one of them has ever been late by a fraction of a second in all the centuries. Now, if God plans the flowers and birds and stars, I believe He also plans your life and mine. For when the last flower is withered and the last bird song dead and the last star has closed its silvery eye, you and I shall be yet in our infancy in the great Nursery of Eternity.

I believe God plans our lives, in the second place, because it is the clear teaching of His Book. As we turn the pages of our Bible we find man after man whose life God definitely planned. And these lives are victorious and useful, just in proportion as they are loyal to the will of God. And when they take themselves outside the circle of His will there is always failure and disappointment. What a pathetic ruin is Saul! I know of few pictures more tragic than the poor, dogged and perplexed man as he wakes up to his utter godlessness. Hear his pathetic sob: "The Lord has departed from me and heareth me no more!" What is the secret of his ruin? Disobedience—he took himself out of the hand of God.

Not only does our Lord teach us this through the lives of His saints, He also teaches it by very unmistakable

declarations. He said that "He gave to every man his work." He said, "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." We see Him definitely choosing men for discipleship. We see Him sending out Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary tour. And we see all through the centuries men and women by the thousand who have gone forth to live their lives under the conscious leadership of the Spirit of God—men and women who were enabled to say: "To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world."

Now, what does it mean for God to plan our lives? Certainly it is a truth that ought to let loose a whole choir of songbirds in our hearts. It ought to sow a very profusion of flowers in the garden of our souls. This is true because it speaks of the highest possible privilege. For, mark you, God's planning our lives does not mean that He has fixed a groove in which we must run whether we want to or not. It simply means this, that God has planned and we may or may not execute the plan. Remember God will never compel you to accept His will for your life. You may tear His plans into shreds. Just as many a young fellow has thwarted the plans of those who love him, so you may thwart the plans and purposes of God in your life.

No, this doctrine does not mean compulsion. It means privilege, and that only. It means that God is the architect and man is the builder. You may refuse His plans, but in so doing you have refused the highest. In so doing you deliberately uncrown yourself. In so doing you miss the deepest and sweetest secret of human blessedness. For the secret of life at its best is just this, to live it within the circle of the will of God.

Now, the supreme question, it seems to me, especially

for you young people, is just this: What is God's will for my life? What did God mean when He made me? What purpose does He have in me?

"To be or not to be, that is the question." But if question it is, it is the question of the stage. It is the question of a mad man. It is the question of a pessimist. It is the question of one in hopeless rebellion and despair at the fact that the world is out of joint and that he was ever born to set it right.

But the question for men and women, sons and daughters of God, is this: Being, how shall I make the most of life? How shall I meet my obligations and discharge my responsibilities in the finest and noblest way? And there is but one answer to that question—you will come to your highest only as you find and carry out in your own life God's purpose for you. He knows you as you can never know yourself. To enter into His will is to climb the mountain heights of your highest possibilities.

But how am I to know God's will for me? There are a number of considerations, I think, that enter into the solution of this question. Of course there are some things we know that are true of all of us in general. We know that our part at least is to be a part of helping and not of hindering. It is to be a part of serving and not simply of being served. It is to be a part of going forward and not of holding back, of lifting up and not of dragging down. There are some people who seem to think that all they were sent here to do is to stand on the side line and watch the game and criticise the players. But God never called any man to any such low and unholy calling.

How am I to know? In the first place, I think you

may be guided in some measure by your own talents, by your aptitude. Other things being equal, I believe God calls a man to do what he can do.

Second, you will be influenced in some measure by the work that needs to be done. What does life need? Where is the field whose ripening harvests promise the largest returns from the investment of a life? Where do I see the opening of the widest door? For, believe me, today doors are opening everywhere. God is needing men in business who will conduct their business as Christian stewards. God is needing men in professional life who will discharge their professions as ministers of the manifold grace of God. In this great field of the world where God so needs laborers, what is the loudest call that comes to me?

And then finally, God has promised you His personal guidance in the selection of your life task. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy path." If you will ask God to lead you into the realization of His plan and purpose for you, ask Him with a willingness to follow where He leads, He will not disappoint you. I do not say He will give you a map of the whole way, but He will show you the task that comes first, and He will enable you to sing:

Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.

And whether your life is lived in the throng or in the obscure place, whether it is to be a ministry packed with service or a ministry of hidden pain, whether you are a Knight of the Sick Room or a hero of the field of battle—God will guide you and will give you the

glad consciousness that you are in your place and are fulfilling the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

What would it mean for us this morning, if definitely and with wholeness of heart we should put our lives into God's hands for the fulfilling of His purposes? It would mean for some of us the changing of the plans that we have made for ourselves. It would mean for some the giving up of our selfish ambitions. It would mean for some, a definite decision for the Christian ministry. How the Church is needing preachers today, and what a field it is! To what greater honor could any man aspire than to the high position of being a preacher of the "unsearchable riches of Christ!" Paul said he was poor—and poor he was, but that he made many rich. What a fine task to enrich the world, to find men poor in hope, poor in power, poor in the presence of the devastations that death has wrought, and to leave them rich, rich in the confidence that God is able to save unto the uttermost, rich in the glorious assurance that one day "this corruptible must put on incorruption" and that love shall find its own in the Land of Eternal Sunshine.

What finer ambition could any mother have for her boy than that he should be a minister of the Gospel of Christ? And how you might help him in his decision if you would but talk with him and pray for him! For the homes where preachers are called and the homes where missionaries are called are homes whose religious life is made vital and warm by the breath of prayer. "The harvest truly is plenteous and the laborers are few." Ask the Lord to send you. Ask the Lord to send the child of your love into the Christian ministry

to serve God here in the great and romantic enterprise of helping to bring in the Kingdom by the preaching of the Gospel.

If you will yield yourself to God today it might mean for some of you that God would call you to be missionaries. The money has been pledged in our great Centenary enterprise, but we are needing more missionaries and more preachers, more young men and women to give themselves to special and definite Christian work. To what finer enterprise could you dedicate your life than to that of witnessing for God in the faraway places of the earth? We must overcome the evils of heathenism with good or we ourselves shall be conquered, for we are one world as never before. There are "no wards in this world hospital" today. We are all together. The only way that we can remain vitally Christian ourselves is to give Christianity to the nations.

To submit yourself definitely to the will of God would mean for most of us the doing of the same tasks that we are doing, but the doing of them in a new and glorious spirit. For the will of God transfigures every task, however low, and floods it with the light of eternity. God is calling most of us to serve in the places that are humble and obscure, but if we are faithful we shall as genuinely carry out His purpose as the mightiest archangel before His throne.

Thousands at His bidding speed and post
O'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve, who only stand and wait.

The big question for all of us is just this: "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?" Have you found the answer to that question? We must be willing to go or

to stay, as God shall call. Sometimes those that long to stay in the home field are strangely driven forth by the will of God. Sometimes those who wish to go are just as strangely held back. Many a time these ways of God are perplexing and we do not understand. However, I am sure that one day, if not here, at least when we look back upon our road from some watch tower in eternity, we shall understand fully.

I bring you to this question: What are you going to do with your life? How many men I have known who looked back with regret! Some of them were called into the ministry and refused. Some of them were called to give their lives to noble and unselfish service and refused. Today they look back over it all with grief too bitter for tears.

Dr. F. B. Meyer tells this story. A young man stepped into the study of his uncle one morning. That uncle was a great preacher. He said to him, "Uncle, what are you going to preach about Sunday?" And the preacher replied, "I am going to preach on this text: 'To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world.'" The young man was thoughtful for a moment and said, "Uncle, why was I born?" And the preacher replied, "I do not know, but if you will be obedient God will let you know."

The young man left the room and went out on the street. Just around the corner he saw a crowd before a theater. He hurried to the scene and found that the building was in flames. He assisted in the work of rescue. He brought out one man after another till he had saved some thirteen. He was then struck by a piece of falling timber and taken in a state of unconsciousness to the hospital. Word was carried to his

uncle and he hurried to the hospital to see him. As the preacher entered the room where the wounded man lay he opened his eyes. Consciousness had come back to him, just a brief moment of consciousness before he passed into the presence of the King. And he said, "Uncle, I know now 'to this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world' that I might save those thirteen."

That preacher said that months later he was in a hotel in Paris. A wild eyed man approached him and began to talk. He grew more and more excited in his talk. At last he said, "I was in a burning building sometime ago and I saved myself. I saved myself!" Just then a man came and led him away. A little later this man returned to apologize to the preacher. He said, "This man was in a theater that burned some months ago. He left his friends and saved himself, and the thought of it has driven him mad."

There is only one sure road to your highest usefulness. There is only one way to realize your highest blessedness, and that is in the doing of the will of God. To seek to save your life is to lose it. To lose your life is to keep it unto life eternal. May the Lord grant unto us so to live that when the sunset comes we may be able in our finite way to say, "I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

AN OLD TIME MOTHER

I SAMUEL, 1:27 and 28

You will find the text in I Samuel, first chapter, twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth verses: "For this child I prayed; . . . Therefore have I lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord." These are the words of a mother. As she utters them she is looking into the face of her first baby boy. She is glad with the glorious gladness of motherhood. And we in this distant day are interested in her. We lean across the centuries to get a look at her winsome face. We are interested in her not because of her cleverness, though I am sure she was clever; we are interested in her not because she was a leader in society—we are interested in her because she was a mother, a successful mother.

Now, the first fact we notice about this old time mother was that she looked upon motherhood as a privilege. She yearned above all else to become a mother. She did not look upon this high task as drudgery. She did not look upon it as something that was to be abhorred because it would narrow her sphere. She did not believe for a moment that it would change her home into a kind of Bastille. She believed, on the other hand, that a child was needed to change her house into a home.

Many a woman in Hannah's place would have been altogether satisfied without little Samuel. She had a

good husband. She had a big house. She had plenty of servants, but she did not feel that she had the best. She wanted the hug of baby arms. She wanted the kiss of baby lips. She wanted to hear the patter of baby feet. And so when little Samuel came he was welcome. A thousand kisses were waiting for him. His coming was the signal for the bursting of spring-time upon the hills of his mother's heart.

Now, I am aware of the fact that Hannah lived a long time ago. In that far off day there was only one honorable vocation open to women. That was the vocation of wifehood and motherhood. Of course things are different now. We live in a new and better day. We live in the day of what is called "the emancipation of woman." Woman's sphere is no longer circumscribed. Today roadways lead directly from her door into almost all the vocations upon which man enters.

For instance, today a woman may succeed in business. She may succeed as a physician. She may succeed as a lawyer. She may succeed in literature. She may even succeed as a politician. And to this I am making no objection. I do not claim for a moment that God expected that every woman should marry. And I say all honor to the woman who fulfills her destiny. All honor to the princess who, deprived of the privilege of mothering her own child, opens her heart to some needy little Moses. All honor to her who, the bride of no husband, becomes the bride of the world's need. But what I do say is this, and I believe most of you will agree with me, that Hannah's vocation is the supreme vocation. Her task is the highest. And I can not but believe that the woman who deliberately turns aside from it abdicates her supremest throne. I feel somehow that

she lays aside her most resplendent crown and stops her ears to the "deepest and sweetest secret of human blessedness."

And you will readily understand that in so saying I am not meaning in any sense to discount a woman's powers. I am not meaning in any sense to imply her inferiority. I am rather implying the opposite. Hers is certainly the supreme influence in human society. The mother is the only individual who ever really rules the world. Woman may exercise a tremendous influence in various vocations outside the home, but her place of greatest power has been, and will ever be, in the home.

Who are the women to whom the world today is most indebted? We owe much to those brilliant and gifted toilers who from the platform and through the printed page have made their contribution to the world, but we owe still more to those hidden toilers who were the mothers of men. We hear little of Mrs. Luther as a religious leader, but we know this, that she rocked a Reformation in her cradle. I feel confident that it would have been possible for Mrs. Wesley to have shone almost anywhere, but she rendered her finest service in giving to the world through her boys a new church that has been the mightiest influence for the spread of the Gospel since the days of the Apostles.

The second fact we notice about this old time mother is that she was a praying mother. She could say, "For this child I prayed." I feel confident that prayer was one of the fixed habits of her life. She was a woman of genuine piety. She was a woman of real consecration. She put God first in her own heart and in her own home.

"For this child I prayed"—can you say that? God pity the child that comes into a home where nobody prays. It seems to me that if nothing else in the world would lead us to pray we might be led to do so by the heavy responsibilities of fatherhood and motherhood. We can not hope to succeed in any other way. We need to be praying the prayer constantly of the friend at midnight. We need to remind God of the child that has come, and that we have nothing of spiritual bread to give except it be given from above.

Then we need to be men and women of prayer, in the second place, because there is no influence more dominant in the shaping of the religious life of the child. Why are you here in God's house this morning? I dare say that most of you are here because you were brought up in a home whose religious atmosphere was made vital by prayer. I am sure that that is the reason that I am here.

The community in which I was brought up was by no means a religious community. We had preaching only at rare intervals. Sunday School privileges were poor indeed. But father and mother knew how to pray. The recollection of the oldest of us does not go back beyond the family altar. And every child reared in that home is an active Christian today. And of the six boys, three of them are today in the active itinerant Methodist ministry.

In the third place, this old time mother was a wise mother. She was far ahead of her day. She is far ahead even of many who live in our day. She recognized her child as God's child. She believed that God was interested in him. She believed that God loved him. She believed that God had a place for him.

Therefore she dedicated him to God. She "lent him to the Lord."

2 I wonder if you are willing to give your child to the Lord. Some parents are afraid to do that. I was talking to a mother sometime ago and she said, "Oh, I would hate for one of my boys to be a preacher." And I marveled at her. I wondered, in the first place, how she could pray the "Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His harvest," and yet ask Him to exempt her own boys. Then I wondered, in the second place, how she could hope for anything better or finer for her sons than that they should be ministers of the Gospel of Christ. I do not see how anybody could wish for anything higher either for themselves or for others. To me it is the finest of all privileges. To me it is like making a journey into a new country. It is like a mountain climb where the vistas are more and more glorious, and the panoramas are more and more magnificent. I think I rejoice with increasing joy as the days go by that to me is this grace given, that I might preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. I tell you, there could come to me no higher joy than that of seeing my own boys enter the Christian ministry.

A few months later I was in another home. There were four children in that home, two boys and two girls. And the mother said this to me, "I am praying that God will call both my daughters into the foreign field. I am praying that He will call both my sons to be preachers of the Gospel." She had the spirit of Hannah. More than that, she had the spirit of Christ. She was willing to give. She was willing to give the best. She was willing, as this old time mother, to dedicate her children to God.

And not only did Hannah give Samuel to the Lord, but she gave Samuel to the Lord in infancy. She gave him to the Lord while he was yet a child. She did not think, as some seem to, that it was necessary for Samuel to be lost before he was saved. She did not think that it was necessary that he go into the Far Country before he was fit for the fellowship of his Father's House. She believed, on the other hand, that God had a right to every day of his life. She believed that it was his privilege to be as clean and unspotted throughout all his days as he was when he slept his first sleep and dreamed his first dream on her mother bosom.

You can see from this that Hannah was far ahead of her time. More has been thought and written about the religion of the child in the last few years than in all the centuries together, and yet there are those still who are not up with Hannah. We have plenty of people today who hardly believe in the possibility of a child's being a Christian. We still have those who believe that the only Christians are the ones who come to God by way of repentance after years spent in sin.

At the close of a children's service sometime ago a man took me to task. He did not believe in children coming into the church so young. He said some of them would never know when they were saved. He also said that he would not give the snap of his finger for any man's religion unless he could tell the day and the hour when he found the Lord. And I said, "Why wouldn't you?" And he said, "Because I wouldn't." And I said, "Why wouldn't you?" And he said, "Because I wouldn't." And again I said, "Why wouldn't you?" And again he gave the same illuminating answer: "Because I wouldn't."

When I was a boy my father gave me a little colt. He gave me that colt the very day it was born. At once I took an interest in it. At once I began to pet it. It was not very long till I had a bridle on it. A few more months passed and I put a saddle on it. Later still I began to lean my weight upon it. At last when it was strong enough, and I was brave enough, I actually climbed on its back. And would you believe it? It never pawed me and it never kicked me and it never bit me. And I doubt if it ever knew the day or the hour when it was "broke."

Now, there was another colt about the same age of mine, but he was nobody's pet. He had no particular attention, but when he was three years of age Father said that it was time to break him. In other words, it was time for him to be converted into a work horse.

So after much trouble we managed to get him into a stable. After still more trouble we got a bridle on him. Then we managed to get him saddled. But the back of that colt went up like the apex of an isosceles triangle. The man that was on his back erased himself! At last, however, the task of breaking was accomplished. I suppose the colt never forgot the ordeal. But I submit to you that my colt was just as fully broken as this.

It is said that there is a certain flower in the tropics that bursts into bloom with a report like the crack of a pistol. As you ride through the forest you hear it and you know that that flower has bloomed. But that is not the way the roses bloom in your garden. One evening you notice a bud. That night the dew weeps its tears upon it. In the morning the sunlight kisses it. And when you look again it is a full blown rose. Nobody heard it, and yet it has bloomed just as fully

as did the flower the report of whose blooming rang throughout the forest.

Let us not forget then that a child can be a Christian. Jesus said it was to them, and to those who succeed by the grace of God in becoming like them that the Kingdom belongs—"Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." They can be Christians for the simple reason that the characteristics that go to the making up of a Christian belong to the child by nature. God gave them to him.

Take faith, for instance. There is no salvation without faith. ". . . He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarded of them that diligently seek him." It is by grace we are saved through faith, but as we grow older we find it harder and harder to believe. But faith with a child is natural and easy. The truth of the matter is that a child will believe anything till by deceiving him we teach him to believe otherwise.

You can go home from this service today and take your child on your knee and tell him that you climbed up last night and bit a piece out of the face of the moon. What will he say? He will not ask you how you got up there. He will ask how it tastes. He will believe you.

Of course many times we begin at the very beginning to deceive our children. We begin to teach them that we will hardly do to trust. We promise them gifts of pleasure or gifts of punishment that we never make good. And little by little the child learns its lesson of unbelief.

Here is a mother, for instance. She is busy sewing.

She does not want the little fellow to go outside the room, so she tells him that if he goes the "Bogey Man" will get him. Now, he is immensely afraid of the "Bogey Man." He would not be caught by him for anything. But he would certainly like to see him without being caught. He has curiosity—so have you unless you are dead.

I have heard people actually criticise folks for being curious. Why, curiosity shows us that we have not lost the child heart. If you are not curious you will make no progress in any direction. Curiosity is the name of the ship on which all discoverers have sailed to the discovery of new continents. Curiosity is the name of the microscope through which the scientist has looked in his laboratory. Curiosity is the name of the telescope through which the astronomer has discovered the secrets of the heavens.

Twinkle, twinkle little star,
How I wonder what you are.

And because he wondered, because he was curious—he studied the stars and mapped their courses.

Yes, the child is curious. So he begins to slip toward the door, and his eyes are wide with wonder and expectation. He is looking for the "Bogey Man." He comes near to the door, but he does not see him. He stands in the door, and still no "Bogey Man." Then he steps boldly out, and nothing catches him. He then comes back. And though he may not tell his mother what she has told, he knows. Thus we may teach our child unbelief. But naturally he is a child of faith.

Then, a child is naturally loyal to those it loves. A child is naturally docile, teachable. And it is our

privilege and our duty to take this faith and loyalty and teachableness and turn them in the direction of our heavenly Father. It is possible for us to do this so successfully that the child will never know itself as other than a Christian.

Not only can a child be a Christian, but a child can remain a Christian easier than anybody else. It is easier for a child to be a Christian than any one else, in the first place, because it has not yet become the slave of evil habits. I recall a man converted under my ministry. I think I have never known a man who enjoyed being a Christian more than he. But one day he came to me with face drawn with pain, and he said, "You know the life I used to live. I have been a drunkard. My old appetite is gnawing at me. I would give my right arm this minute for one drink of liquor."

I had to be out of town a few weeks a little later. When I got back they told me that Bob was slipping down again. I did my best with him. But in the end he went back utterly. The last time I saw him he looked me frankly in the face and said he never expected to try again.

To come to Christ as a child is to miss the bondage of evil habits. Your child may never be in bondage to drink, but the bondage of years of unspiritual and Christless thinking is just as hard to break away from. And because by coming as a child you will escape this bondage, it is easier for a child to be a Christian than for anyone else.

It is easier, in the second place, because if your child comes as a child it will be far more likely to escape the bondage of evil companionships. I had another friend in this same church who was converted one night. He

had been living a double life. He went home and called up his partner in sin and told her that he was through. And she answered, "Yes, after you have wrecked my life you will throw me away like a dried orange peel, while you make religion into a fire escape and get back into decent society. You will never do it. I will camp on your trail." And camp she did. That man is standing true today, but as he told me, none but God and himself will ever know the terrible fight he has had. If your child comes to Christ as a child he will be far less likely to be caught in the net of an evil companionship.

Not only is it easier for a child to be a Christian than anyone else, but those who come as children make the best Christians. That is only reasonable. Who make the best baseball players? Not those who begin playing at forty, but those who begin in youth. Who make the best musicians? Answer: Those who began in childhood. Who make the best Christians? The answer is the same. The work of the Church today is being carried on in large measure by those who came to Christ in childhood.

Not only do those who come to Christ as children make the best Christians, but unless they come as children the chances are that they will never come at all. It is in large measure a question of now or never. Very few men of white hair ever find the Lord. I recall a very fine old gentleman that used to live near my church in Fort Worth. When he was near seventy he began to face the fact that he was going soon to have to change worlds. And he made this significant statement, "I would like to be a Christian, but I don't know how. When I was young the thought of God used

to haunt me. I would have to fight to put the thought of Him out of my mind. But now I want to think about Him and I don't seem to have the capacity." He had waited too long.

Hannah was wise. She dedicated her boy to God. She gave him to God in his young and tender years. She was wise, too, in another respect—"Moreover," we read in the story, "she made him a little coat." He was ministering in the Temple, but when she made him a coat she did not make one large enough for Eli. She made one to fit the boy.

I wish we might always be as wise. Your child can be a Christian, but remember he is still a child. Do not expect him to have the experience of an adult. Do not expect him to tell his experience in the language of an adult. The chances are there is something wrong if he does. He will doubtless not express himself as you do.

It is said that when Helen Keller was learning to read she had much trouble with the word "love." When she came to the word "book" it was easy for her to understand that. It was easy for her teacher to explain it to her. She needed only to hand her a book. But with "love" it was different. Helen had so much trouble with it that at last she came to believe that her stupidity must be a great source of worry to her teacher. So when she would find that word she would put down her book and go and climb into her teacher's lap and put her arms around her neck and kiss her, and sometimes the tears would fall. She was so sorry that she could not define "love." But if she could not express it in words she could act it and live it. And so a child can act and live its religion.

And the last fact I want you to notice about this old time mother was that she succeeded. She made good in the highest of all vocations. The story tells us that all Israel knew that a prophet had risen. And Hannah had the joy of knowing that she had rocked Israel's prophet to sleep in her arms. She knew that this great gift to the world of a seer was under God her gift. Hers was the joy of success.

And you will miss the whole point of the story if you look upon Samuel as an abnormal boy. He did not become a prophet by accident. He was not a saint as a mere matter of chance. What he became was but the logical outcome of his home training. Hannah put God first in her own life. She put God first in her home. And she had a right to expect great and blessed results, and great and blessed results did follow.

Now, I take it that we who are fathers and mothers here today would like to succeed as did this old time mother. We can not afford not to succeed. What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own boy? I am confident also that God has made success possible for us. But we can only hope for success as we make this matter a matter of conviction. We must make it a matter of earnest effort. We must Christianize our own homes. We must put God first in our own lives. And if our children see the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ in our faces, they will not be faithless but believing.

What a wide difference there was between Abraham and Lot in this particular. There is no more tragic failure in history than Lot, and yet he was a righteous man. He was a believer. But he did not put God first. He put the world first. And the result was that

CONVICT NUMBER ONE

GENESIS, 4: 9

“Where is thy brother?” This is God’s second question. His first question is: “Where art thou?” “A man’s first business,” one has said, “is to save his own soul.” That may sound selfish, but it is not selfish. This is true from the fact that a man must know the way into the light before he brings his brother there. Andrew must find Jesus himself and come to know Him before he introduces Simon.

But God’s second question is: “Where is thy brother? You know of whom He asked this question. He asked it of Cain. Everybody is acquainted with Cain. He has a branded brow. He is Convict Number One. He is the world’s first murderer. His face is the first that looks out upon us from the walls of the world’s great Rogues’ Gallery. It is a hard, sinister face. Its eyes are cold and cruel. The hands are gnarled and blood-stained. Poor, murderous Cain—we would know him anywhere. No criminal dressed in stripes was ever more conspicuous than is Convict Number One.

And because we know Cain as a murderer, and only as a murderer, we wonder why a preacher should speak of him before a decent and self-respecting congregation. We feel no kinship with him. We like to think of him as made of altogether different clay from ourselves. We like to think thus of all who go horribly and wretch-

edly wrong. We love to think of them as monstrosities. We like to think of them as made up of the slime and ooze of things, but in so thinking we are wrong, altogether wrong.

Cain is a blood brother to ourselves. If we do not realize this it is because we do not know the real Cain—and most of us do not truly know him. We only got one view of him. We saw only one picture, and that picture was of a man with a club in his hand pounding the head of his brother. But let me remind you that you can not form an adequate conception of the whole man by simply getting one view of his face.

Not long ago a family from Tennessee was touring the north in an auto. There was the father and mother and two daughters. The daughters, I am told, were extremely beautiful. But a train wrecked the car one day and ground those lovely daughters almost into fragments. Suppose you had seen the ghastly remains, and as you came away I would ask, "Were they pretty?" And you would have shuddered and said, "Ah no, they were ghastly." But you only saw them after the wreck.

I buried a white-haired old grandmother. I had never seen her before. Her cheeks were sunken and her eyes were deep and hollow. Her hands were cold and clawlike. There was little of beauty there. But I got only the last look. If you want to know the facts about the woman ask the man who lived with her and loved her. Let him tell you how she looked that distant day "when love's morning had its dawn." Let him tell you something of her beauty when her face was crowned with the sweet radiance of motherhood.

And Cain—he has a brutal face. But it was not

always so. I doubt if there was ever a happier mother than was Eve. Cain was the first baby that ever came into this world. His coming was the signal for "the bursting of a thousand sunrises on the morning hills of his mother's heart." What did she name him? Not "murderer." Eve could never have imagined such a name. And do you blame her? Who could have? Was ever a little body more tender and warm and nestling? Was ever a hand more soft and dimpling? Would the time ever come when that face would be flushed with anger and hate? Would the time ever come when that little hand would be big and knotty and cruel? She could not think so.

What, I say, then did she name him? She named him Cain, a name which signifies, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." Why did she so name him? Because he was so wonderful. He was so beautiful. There was such a breath of Heaven about him. There were such marks of divinity upon him. She could not conceive of his having been given by anyone other than the infinite God. So winsome was he that the same hands that fashioned the lovely stars and painted the rose's cheek must have made him also.

"I have gotten a man from the Lord"—that was what she said when she held him fast. That was what she named him, for he was a child of hope. God had told her that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. He had told her that final victory was not to be with Wrong, but with Right. And she was coming even then to believe that—

Truth, crushed to earth, will rise again.

She even believed that Cain was the Christ Child. And

we can not blame her. Christlike possibilities he had within him, just as really as he had the possibilities of murder within him.

So Cain was once a baby as sweet and innocent and as pure as your baby and mine. But there came a time as he grew older that sin entered into his life. Cain became a wrong-doer, not from necessity—he became one from choice. He became so brutally and viciously wrong that he actually stained himself with his brother's blood. But mark you, he did not descend to that awful depth at once. He did not spring into that abysm of shame like a man leaping from a cliff top. He descended into it step at a time.

The first view we get of Cain, the wrong-doer, Cain, the sinner, is at the altar of sacrifice. The world's first quarrel was beside an altar. And a man reveals himself ever by his religion. He reveals himself by his conception of God. For "men are like the gods they serve." And we see the wickedness of this man as we watch him at his worship. For mark you, Cain was religious. Every man is. Man is incurably religious. Now, a man's religion may save him or it may damn him. It may make him good. It may only intensify his wickedness. A man may be devoutly religious and horribly devilish all at the same time. There are few more religious men than the Mohammedan. He is religious in the midst of his murder and of his adultery. So Cain was religious.

We read that Cain and Abel went together to offer sacrifice and that God had respect unto Abel and his offering, but that to Cain and his offering He had no respect. That is, He accepted the offering of the one and rejected the offering of the other. Why was this

true? It was not true because of any partiality on God's part. It was not because He loved Abel and did not love Cain. Cain's offering was rejected because Cain himself was rejected. And Cain was rejected because of his deliberate sin.

Now, what was the matter with Cain? Just this, for him there was no vital connection between religion and morality. His religion did not make for right doing and right living. He offered sacrifice. He prayed, not because he was penitent. He prayed, not because he hated sin and loved righteousness. He prayed more because he wanted protection in his sin.

A woman who has been traveling in Italy told me recently that in some of the villages there you would find "indulgences" hanging up along with onions and other vegetables. You could buy the privilege of sinning, just as you bought the privilege of eating vegetables. And though we are horrified at such mockery, there is a deal of the same spirit in a great many of us. We have criticized our Catholic friends a good many times for the fact that after having done their religious duties, they feel at liberty to do as they please. They go to mass on Sunday morning. Having done that, they can give the rest of the day to the devil.

But do we not get tinctured with the same false faith? Do we not sometimes see the dismal, sickening spectacle of people who believe that they can do almost anything they like Sunday afternoon and night, provided they have gone to church and Sunday School in the morning? It was said of Louis XI that he never sinned quite so gleefully as after he had prayed. He felt that he had in some measure purchased to himself the right to sin by having been good.

Believe me, there is but one way to get our offerings accepted before the Lord. And that is to come in a spirit of repentance, to come really desiring to get rid of our sins. There is no more utter mockery in the sight of God than bringing to God an offering of prayer, for instance, a prayer for pardon, when we expect to commit the same old sin the next day. What a hollow mockery to fall on our knees before God and say, "Lord, I have sinned—forgive me," when we intend to be guilty of the same thing whenever we please.

Now, suppose that when this service is over a friend of mine is standing by and I give a stretch and a yawn and smash his nose. Then I say, "Excuse me, please." And he is gracious enough to excuse me. And then suppose I give another yawn and smash his nose again. Again I say, "Excuse me." Then a third time I repeat the performance—what happens? By this time my friend gives up the excusing business altogether. Why? Simply because he sees that I want the fun of smashing his nose and only ask his pardon to keep him from smashing mine. And many of our sacrifices are just like that. That was the kind of sacrifice Cain offered.

There is no use in asking for pardon unless you purpose to quit your sin. There is no use in giving unless you give more than your money. Christianity means righteousness. To people who will not earnestly strive to live right, God has nothing to promise but punishment. He told the Jews in Isaiah's day that their religious observances and their temple treading, their very praying, was an abomination unto Him because their hands were full of blood.

Cain, then, was rejected. His rejection angered him. The fact that his brother was accepted angered

him still more. Then God made to him this very reasonable appeal: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth or croucheth, like a wild beast at thy door."

Sin—the word "sin" occurs here for the first time in the Bible. And notice the meaningful word that is used of it. It is described as crouching like a beast at the sinner's door. "Sin croucheth at thy door, and its desires shall be unto thee." The relation between the sinner and his sin is described, as Dr. Maclaren points out, by the same words that are used to describe the holy relationship between a man and his wife—"its desire shall be unto thee." That is, a sin once committed seems to love the sinner with a kind of fiendish, tigerish, murderous ferocity. That is God's picturesque way of telling us that sin seeks to repeat itself. And the man was right who said that it is easier to find one who has never sinned than to find one who has never committed the same sin twice.

Now, what was the sin of Cain? Every child can answer that. It was murder. No, that was the outcome of his sin. That was its bloody fruitage. Cain's real sin was envy, born of pure, unadulterated selfishness. He became angry at his brother. He hated his brother. He murdered his brother, not because he had been harmed by him, but because he envied him.

So you see envy is an old sin. It is old and deadly. It comes upon the first page of human history. And there it has a murderer's club in its hand. And it has been a murderer from that day till now. It was envy that sought to murder Joseph. It was envy that made Saul seek to murder David. It was envy that sought to feed Daniel to the lions. It was envy that made

Elizabeth murder the more beautiful Mary Queen of Scots. It was envy that drove the nails into the hands and feet of Christ.

What is envy? It is not jealousy, as Dr. Clow points out. We use the words as if they meant the same. They are as far apart as night from day. Jealousy, he tells us, is a child of love. Jealousy may be an altogether right emotion. God is jealous. Jealousy is one of the pangs that Love feels when it is cheated of its dues. I know it is at times dangerous because of its tendency to make the meat it feeds upon. But when it knows itself cheated, jealousy is right and natural.

But envy—it is a child of hate. It is never anything but devilish. It does not seek to be as successful in the race as its fortunate brother. That would be emulation. It seeks to drag its brother back. It is a fatal malady. It has been pictured as a devilish thing with wide ears for the catching of slander, with a tongue that is a serpent, with feet standing in fire as a symbol of the wretchedness that always dogs its steps.

Cain was envious. And everyone of you who has never envied anybody may throw a stone at him. I confess that thought palsies my arm. I can not stone him. I doubt if you can. For envy is one of the commonest sins. And it is one, as has been said, that is least often confessed.

Young lady, when you made slighting remarks about that girl friend of yours, you did not tell the one to whom you were speaking that the reason you made those remarks was because you envied her. When I said stinging and mean things about my brother in the ministry who was succeeding a little better than I,

I did not tell you that the secret of it was not so much that I disapproved of his methods as because I had been smitten with this devil's leprosy of envy. Does it pain you to hear another complimented? Are you grieved when one who is working at the same task at which you work is praised? Is it a joy to you to hear your rival picked to pieces? Then beware. You have incipient murder in your heart.

Now, this man Cain—envy mastered him and he committed the fatal crime that wrecked his home and blasted his life. But even when the deed was done God did not give him up. He came with the question: "Where is thy brother?" He did not ask this of Cain because He did not know the deed he had done. God knows you and me tonight just as we are. He knew Cain. He asked him that question that Cain might come to himself, might realize his awful wretchedness and wickedness and repent. But Cain answered with an insolent lie. He only said, "Am I my brother's keeper? Abel is nothing to me. 'Every fellow for himself and the devil take the hindmost.' That's my doctrine."

And God is asking you that question: "Where is thy brother?" Where is that friend of yours? Where is your room-mate? When he began to room with you he read his Bible. He prayed. He loved God and the Church. He was clean. Where is he tonight? Has your indifference, have your worldliness and wickedness weaned him from the Church and from his mother's God? Where is your boy? When God gave him to you he was clean. You were careless and Christless in your home. Did you teach him by your own indifferent living to ignore God and His Church? And has that

boy stumbled over your ragged life and gone out into sin tonight beyond the reach of your hand and the call of your voice?

"Where is thy brother?" Do not think God is not going to ask you that question. Our lives take hold on each other, and no man can live as he pleases. You may say, "I am going to go my own way and if the other fellow is weak enough to follow, it's no business of mine." But when you have said that you would do well to acknowledge to yourself that you have lied, for you have. You are responsible for the life you live and for its influence upon those that you touch. "Am I my brother's keeper?" The question comes to us "streaked with murder and young with an immortality of selfishness." The man who asked it first was a murderer and the man who asks it today is a murderer still, though he may never lift his hand against a soul. For mark you, you can be just as cruel in your selfish neglect as Cain was in his deadly blow.

Hear me, young man. If it has seemed to you a rather selfish and limited program for you to be a Christian simply to save your own soul, then remember that it does not end there. If you will be the man that you ought to be it will help every man who knows you to be the man that he ought to be. If you will live the life that you ought to live it will help to raise the moral temperature of the world. If you fail you do not fail alone. If you fail you make it harder for every man that touches you to stand. And we need all the help that we can get, every one of us. And it's up to you to help.

What are you going to take for your standard of conduct? Will you take Cain's standard or Christ's

standard? Cain says, "I have no responsibility as regards the other fellow." Cain says, "I have a right to crush the weak because he is weak, and because I am able to crush him." Cain says, "I have a right to withhold my help from the man who needs it." God says, "Ye that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." He says that we are to bear one another's burdens. And His great Apostle said that if eating meat should cause his brother to stumble, he would eat no more meat while the world stood.

I used to have two schoolmates named Jim and Jess. Jim and Jess were friends. Jim was strong and dominant. Years after we left school I met Jim one day and asked him about his friend. He looked sad a moment and said, "Jess is dying, dying of tuberculosis." "How did that come about?" I asked. Again a hesitation, and then he said, "He is dying because he tried to keep up with me." And he told how they had dissipated together and how one night they were unable to get home and had spent the entire night in the chilling rain. "It did not hurt me," he said, "but with Jess it was different. He was too weak. He was taken sick next day. And now," he continued, "he is dying, dying because he tried to keep up with me."

Now this question. The man that is being influenced by you, the man that in any measure is trying to keep up with you—which way is he traveling? What a word to say—"He died trying to keep up with me." Many a father can say that about his boy. Many another friend can say that about his friend. God help you to say that "My friend found life, found Christ, found Heaven at last trying to keep up with me."

I worked for men, my Lord will say,
When we meet at the end of the King's Highway.
I walked with the beggar along the road;
I kissed the bondman stung by the goad;
I bore my part of the porter's load,—
And what did you, my Lord will say,
As you traveled along the King's Highway?

I made life sweet, my Lord will say,
When we meet at the end of the King's Highway.
I smoothed the path where the thorns annoyed;
I gave the mother back her boy;
I mended the children's broken toy,—
And what did you, my Lord will say,
As you traveled along the King's Highway?

I showed men God, my Lord will say,
When we meet at the end of the King's Highway.
I eased the sister's troubled mind;
I helped the blighted to be resigned;
I showed the stars to souls gone blind,—
And what did you, my Lord will say,
As you traveled along the King's Highway?

A GLIMPSE OF THE AFTER LIFE

LUKE, 16: 19--31

While so much is being said about the after life, so much that is false, so much that is misleading and bewildering, it seems to me altogether wise to learn something of what is said by Him who speaks with authority. The story that I have read to you fell from the lips of Jesus Christ our Lord. It was uttered by Him "who came from God and who went to God." It is altogether wise to remember this. Philosophers, scholars and wise men may speculate, and do speculate, about what lies beyond the grave. Our Lord does not speculate—He knows. He is equally at home in the realm of the seen and the unseen. He is as familiar with the yonder as He is with the here and now.

For this reason we have a right to come to this story with confidence. We have a right to come to it with reverent expectation. It was uttered by Him who of old laid the foundations of the world, by Him who was in the beginning with God, and who is God. Its teachings are the teachings of Him in whom "dwelt all the fulness of the God-head bodily." If there is that in the story which seems to you absurd, remember that it is the utterance of eternal wisdom. If there is that in the story that seems to you heartless and cruel, bear in mind that it is the cruelty of Him who loved us well enough to hang on the nails for our redemption.

As I speak to you about this wonderful story, then, I shall speak with conviction. I shall feel no fear that the ground on which I stand will have a hollow ring as I tread upon it. For I have this confidence in my Lord:—He is too wise to be mistaken and too honest to deceive us. When He had the last conversation with His disciples on this side of the grave, He said to them, “Let not your heart be troubled. In my Father’s House are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you.” That is, “I would not allow you to believe what is false, even though it was a comfortable belief. I would not allow you to rest your heads upon falsehood, even though it might be as soft as pillows of down. I tell you that there is a Homeland of the Soul. I say this, not because it meets the deepest yearnings of your heart, but because it is really true.” So in the story that we have before us we may expect to find that about the after life which is really true.

Look now at the story. It is really a wonderful drama in three scenes. The first scene reveals a typical day in the lives of two men.

“There was a certain rich man that was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.

“And there was a beggar named Lazarus that was laid at his gate, full of sores,

“And desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.”

This then, is the picture upon which the Master lifts the curtain. He makes us see these two individuals. He shows us how they live. He compels us to look at the rich man and also to look at the beggar. That

is all. He utters no word of comment upon the character of either man.

Here is the scene: A lovely palace. You enter the palace through a magnificent portal. The halls are lined with "marble white and black, like the mingling of night and morning." The rooms are hung with the finest of tapestries. And the rugs upon the floor are the choicest product of the oriental loom. There are courts of rare beauty where fountains spray from silver faucets and make lovely and listless music.

Today there is a big banquet at the palace. The select Four Hundred are being entertained. The host receives graciously. He is the best dressed man of the company. He is cultured, refined, elegant, rich. The guests whom he welcomes are likewise elegant and refined and rich.

The scene is altogether pleasing but for one thing. There is one blot upon its beauty. There is one ugly scar upon its loveliness. At the outer gate of this palatial home there lies a bundle of dirty rags. As we look we see the rags stir a bit. It is a sick beggar that is within them trying to make himself comfortable upon the cobblestones. He too seems to be receiving today. But his guests are not refined and cultured. They are the wild, unfriended dogs of the street. These sit about him on their haunches and lick his sores. They too are starved and friendless, but withal they seem less friendless than the sick man whom they are attending.

You will notice at once that Christ has no word of condemnation for the rich man because he is rich or because he feeds well or because he wears fine clothes. Nor is there any attempt on His part to put a halo upon the beggar's head because of his poverty and rags and

sickness. He simply puts the scene before us. We are forced to look at these two men. Physically they are close together. In point of circumstance they are far apart. The one is sick; the other is well. The one is rich; the other is poor. The one fares sumptuously every day; the other feeds on crumbs. The one has friends and the other is unfriended. And as we look we realize that the tragedy of the picture is that the two never actually come together.

"There was a certain rich man"—what is the meaning of the word? Rich man—it stands for power, capacity, ability to serve. "And there was a beggar that lay at his gate full of sores"—that means need. And so we have here ability to serve and a need of service brought close together. The poor man was at the rich man's gate. That means that this poor man was the rich man's responsibility. He was the rich man's opportunity. I do not know what responsibility lay at the gate of the man across the street, but the responsibility of this rich man is very plain. The call for help is loud and insistent. Here was his chance. Here was his opportunity. Here was the safety vault in which he might have made a deposit for eternity.

But the rich man seems never to have seen the man at his gate. He was too busy with his affairs. He was too much occupied with his own pleasures, the pleasures of getting and the pleasures of spending. Not that he was unkind to the beggar—he did not have him stoned, he did not have him thrown into prison. He was not a cruel man, this rich man. At least, he was not aggressively cruel. I dare say he was better than the average. Otherwise he would have driven the old beggar away

and not even allowed him to gather up the crumbs. At least the sin of the man was not that he did anything of harm to the beggar. It was rather in the fact that he let him alone.

The second scene is one familiar enough in our world. The rich man allowed the beggar to receive only the scraps, only the crumbs. Now, men can not be saved by crumbs. God will never save the world through the mere crumbs of our time and of our energy and of our money. The beggar got only the crumbs, so quite naturally it came to pass that the beggar died.

"Ah," you say, "there is nothing startling about that." "I have been expecting him to die for a long time," one said. Another said, "He is out of his misery, better off. To have given him bread would have been a calamity as it might have caused him to suffer only the longer." Yes, the beggar died and nobody thought of being startled by it. Nobody thought of weeping over it. It was not at all disturbing even to the rich man, though if he had been faithful to his duty the beggar might have lived. Thousands die morally every year because we who are rich in resources, material and spiritual, are too self-centered to meet their needs.

"The rich man also died"—now, that is startling. We could easily spare the beggar, but a leading citizen that gave banquets—that is different. "The rich man also died"—he died in spite of his riches. He died in spite of his palace. He died in spite of his fine linen. One day ill mannered Death walked in with his boots muddy with the clay of new-made graves and pushed this self-centered, feasting man out into his tomb.

The rich man died and had a funeral. The funeral

of the beggar is not mentioned. Doubtless he had none. His old sore body was found in the street and carted away with the day's garbage.

Rattle his bones over the stones,
He's only a beggar whom nobody owns.

But the rich man was buried. And here Christ drops the curtain.

When the curtain rises again it rises upon the world unseen.

"It came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."

That is, he was carried into the Paradise of God.

"The rich man also died and was buried ;

"And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom."

How naturally Christ passes from the seen into the unseen. With what absolute at-homeness He shows us these two men as they are in the after life !

What are some of the facts that He tells us through this story ? What light does He throw upon the mystery of the unseen ? They are facts familiar enough to Bible readers. They have been pointed out many times before. First, He tells us very clearly and unmistakably that the dead are still alive, that the man who has passed into the unseen is not asleep. He is consciously and vividly alive. This is true of Lazarus ; this is true also of Dives.

And this fact of the conscious, vivid life of those who have passed into the hereafter is not taught in this parable alone. Over and over again this same truth is

either implied or clearly stated. In speaking of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saints who had passed into the unseen, Jesus did not count them as dead. In fact, He clearly declared quite the contrary. "For God," says He, "is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

When Jesus was hanging on the cross one of the men at His side prayed this marvelous prayer: "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy Kingdom." And Jesus replied to that prayer by giving the dying robber this promise: "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." What did the promise mean? It means that Jesus and the dying robber were going to meet in the Paradise of God that very day; that they were going to be consciously alive and conscious of each other. So Death is not a sleep. All men are consciously alive beyond the grave.

The second fact we learn from this story is that these men are not only alive, but they are conscious of being themselves. Lazarus is still Lazarus. Dives is still Dives. The rich man still speaks of himself and says, "I." He is conscious of the fact that he is the same man on the further side of the grave that he was on this side. He is conscious of the same human relationships. He is conscious of the fact that he is the same individual who once knew Lazarus in this world, and who was also a member of a family of six brothers.

At death we are going to lose something, each of us. We are going to lose the physical. We are going to lose our possessions. Whatever may be our material wealth in this world, we may depend upon it that the hands of the dead are not clutching hands. Our shrouds will have no pockets. Death will rob us of all that is **material**.

But there is one something that Death can not take away from us. It can not rob us of ourselves. Yesterday I was myself. I will be myself still tomorrow. I will continue to be myself as long as Heaven is Heaven, as long as God is God.

Of course by saying that I will forever be myself I do not mean for a moment that I will forever possess this body that I possess tonight or this brain that I possess tonight. But this body is not myself. We are all aware of that. This body is a possession of mine. I own it. I control its movements. I can make it act in accordance with my will. I speak through its lips. I minister through its hands. I look out from its open windows called eyes and receive messages through its open portals called ears. I own a body tonight. However, it is not the same body I once owned. I am fond of change. I get a new suit of clothes for this body now and then. I also get a new suit for this soul of mine at least once every seven years. So I have already worn out five bodies and thrown them away like a cast-off garment. Yet I am still conscious of being the same self that I was the first body I ever owned.

And of course it is not saying anything new to say that my brain is not myself. I possess a brain, but this brain does not control me. I control it. I have power to educate it. I have power to direct its energy. I have power to focus its thinking upon a certain object. I am in the possession of a brain, but I do not possess the same brain I once had. Neither do you. We wear out brains just as we wear out bodies. It is really amazing how some of us wear our brains out using them as little as we do, but we wear them out none the less. And I have had at least five different sets of brains,

and yet I am still the same individual that I was when I was in possession of the first brain I ever had.

Now, if I can throw away five different bodies and five different brains and still be the same man, I can throw away this body and brain into the grave at the end of the day and still be the same. The truth of the matter is, death is not going to touch me personally at all. It is not going to touch the real "me." For this reason I am going to be exactly the same man the first minute after death as I was the last minute before death. It would work no great moral change in me to pass from one side of the Potomac River to the other, nor would it work any great change for me to pass from one side of the narrow river called Death to the other.

In spite of this fact, however, there is a tremendously great tendency to believe that death will work a moral change, that you can lie down one moment self-centered, sin-conquered, godless—and by the mere act of dying, wake up the next moment holy, sinless and Christlike. It is absolutely false. If Christ does not save you in the here and now, do not expect death to accomplish what He was unable to accomplish. If the blood of Jesus Christ can not cleanse you from all sin, do not be so mad as to expect that cleansing at the hands of the undertaker, the shroud and the coffin. Believe me, that as death finds you, so you will be the instant after when you open your eyes in the world unseen.

The third fact Christ teaches us in this story is that man is not only alive and conscious of self beyond the grave, but that he remembers. Lazarus remembered Dives and Dives remembered Lazarus. They remembered their former experiences. Dives remembered the life he used to live. He remembered his selfishness and

his sin. He remembered his lost opportunities. He remembered the five brothers in the home from whence he had come, and how his own life had helped them to be selfish and godless like himself. In the after life you are going to remember. Memory is going to be a power that will help to intensify the joys of Heaven. It will also help to embitter the pangs of hell.

Finally, Christ makes it plain to us in this story that all men are not going to have the same destiny in the world unseen. He teaches us that there is going to be a separation there between the good and the bad, between the Christlike and the Christless. These two men in the world unseen were separated. Between them, we are told, there was a great gulf fixed. Who separated them? God, you say? I deny it. They separated themselves. The chasm between Dives and Lazarus was made in this life. They made different choices here. Those different choices led to different characters. They became morally separated by a chasm as wide as right from wrong, as night from day. And that separation continued beyond the grave.

Why was Lazarus carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom? It was not because that in this life he was unfortunate. It was not because he was friendless and attended in his last illness only by dogs. It was not because he was sick and sore and neglected. He was carried into Heaven because that in spite of all these calamities, he made choice of God. His name signifies, "God is my help." And it was this right choice that made him a right character. And this right character made for a glorious spiritual destiny.

Dives, on the other hand, was not lost simply because he was rich. He was not cast out because he wore

fine clothes and had sumptuous feasts. Dives was ruined by a wrong choice. Listen to the story. He is asking for a drop of water to cool his parching tongue. And the reply he receives is this: "Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, likewise Lazarus evil things."

What does it mean? This: "Remember that in your lifetime you made a deliberate choice of the things that are seen. You deliberately chose to live for self. You turned your back upon God, and turning your back upon God, you turned it upon your own brother. You chose to live for the gratification of your own pleasure." That is what brought ruin to Dives—not the fact that he was rich, not the fact that he lived well, but the fact that he deliberately chose to ignore God and to live for self.

Not only did Dives choose to live for himself, but he chose it in the face of the light. He knew better. He knew the life that he ought to live. When he is refused the drop of water, he asks that Lazarus be sent to his five brothers to warn them, thus implying that he was not rightly warned, that if he had had proper warning he himself would never have made the fatal choice that he did make and achieve the fatal destiny that he had achieved. But the reply to this is very emphatic and very clear. "You had," he is told, "what your brothers have—Moses and the prophets. That is light enough. And if a man will not hear them, if a man will not be persuaded by them, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

Men are accustomed to flatter themselves with the belief that they would change their lives and become Christians if certain positive proofs of the life to come

were brought to them. But Christ tells us that men are not convinced by ghosts. Men are not led to repentance by ouija boards and seances. I have known quite a number who claim to have received messages from the dead. I have never known one single one who has been made a New Testament type of Christian by such messages. God's only method of reaching men is through the truth believed in and obeyed, and if men will not hear that they will not be saved, even though one rises from the dead.

Thus it came to pass that Lazarus found himself in Abraham's bosom. It is a Hebrew way of saying that he was in the Paradise of God. He was in a place of comfort. He was in a place of joy. Dives, on the other hand, was in a place of conscious pain. While Lazarus was comforted Dives was tormented. Why was this true? It was not because God loved the one and did not love the other. It was not because God desired to save one and did not desire to save the other. Their different destinies were the inevitable outcome, I repeat, of their different characters, as their different characters were the outcome of their different choices.

The truth of the matter is that God has no way of getting any man into Heaven when he has hell in his own heart. You can not mix the living and the dead even in this life. A little child was last week carried out of a home where it was the idol, and buried. The reason for this conduct on the part of the father and mother was not because they no longer loved the child. They buried the child in spite of their love for it, because it was dead. And hell, whatever else it may be, is the burying ground of dead souls, souls that are dead in trespasses and in sin.

So the conclusion of the whole matter is this: Forever you are going to live. Forever you are going to be yourself. You are going to have to keep house with yourself for all eternity. Forever you are going to remember. Forever you are going to enjoy or suffer the destiny that you make for yourself while in this life. If it sounds foolish remember it is the foolishness of Him "who spake as never man spake." If it seems heartless, remember that it is the heartlessness of Infinite Love. Remember, too, that though some men are lost, no man needs to be lost. Every man can be saved if he will. This minute you can be saved if you will only be wise enough and brave enough to make a right choice. "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Will you come? Will you come now?

A WOMAN'S FALL

GENESIS, 3: 13

"The serpent beguiled me and I did eat." It is hard to tell just what this old story means to a modern audience. I suppose to a large per cent of us it means nothing at all. To some it seems a rather ludicrous piece of fiction. To others it is allegory. To others it is parable. To others it is authentic history.

Now, to be perfectly frank, it matters to me very little how you regard this story so long as you lay hold on the truth of it. And true it is. There is no fact of human history more true. I know that it seems very distant and very hazy to a great many of us, but it is true none the less. And not only is it true, but it is also exceedingly modern. It is entirely up to date. There is no event that you read in the "Post" or the "Star" before you came to church this morning that is any more entirely new than is this story.

It is the story of a woman's fall. And because it is the story of a real human being, it is therefore in large measure the story of every one of us. For we are the same that our fathers have been. The heart of humanity remains unchanged through the years. It ever pulsates to the same great needs, to the same great loves and longings. It hears also the call of the same voices, those that lead upward and those that lead downward.

Now, the first fact that impresses us about this primitive woman is that she was a tempted woman. On the surface there seem very good reasons why she should have escaped temptation, but she did not escape. And no one has escaped since that time. Temptation is a universal experience. To live is to be tempted. There is not one of us but has realized that. If you are no longer tempted it is because you are utterly dead.

This woman was tempted, in spite of the fact that she had advantages that some do not have. In the first place, she had the advantage of being well born. A wonderful creature she is as she stands before God in the morning tide of the world, "unruffled by passion, unclouded by prejudice, unimpaired by disease." There is no poisoned blood in her veins. But even the rich boon of being well born does not protect her from temptation.

It does not protect you and me. Not that it does not give us a great advantage—there is an advantage in being well born that is great beyond all words. There are some children who are "half damned in their birth." The sins of the father are certainly visited upon the children. Live in disregard of the laws of God if you dare, your children will pay the penalty. At least they will pay part of it. The fact that you and I are here this evening we owe in part to our own decision, but we owe it in even larger measure possibly to our pious ancestry. If my father and my mother had not given me the moral momentum of unstained parentage I might be far away from God tonight.

Believe me, it is an unspeakable blessing to be well born. A godly father and mother are a blessing to be thankful for. Next to the gift of the Saviour Himself,

these can give us the most tremendous strength for the resistance of temptation. But though they can help us much in our battles, they can not exempt us from them altogether.

This woman was tempted notwithstanding the fact that she had a good environment. Now, a good environment is not to be despised. There are some whose conquests are made infinitely harder because of a bad environment. Their home life is unwholesome. They live where the voice of prayer is not heard. They grow up where the Bible is not read about the family altar. They grow up where the conversation neglects the spiritual and the eternal, or sometimes scorns and makes light of them. It is a wonderful benediction to have a wholesome environment. But even good birth and a good environment can not shield us altogether from temptation.

So upon this first page of human history we read these two words: "God said"—"The serpent said." That is, upon the first page of human history God spoke. When man became conscious of himself God was there, wooing, loving, inviting, calling him into the path of obedience, which is the upward path. And God speaks on every page of human history. There has never been a day so dark and so voiceless that He has not made Himself heard. God spoke in the life of yesterday. He speaks in the life of today. He utters His voice in a thousand ways. He speaks in the great disasters of human history. He tells us of the awful fatality of sin in terms of nations that have tracked their way in blood to their ruin. He speaks to you tonight through the voice of your conscience. He speaks to you through the voice of the Bible. He speaks to you

through the memory of a godly father and a sainted mother. He speaks to you in the faltering tones of the preacher. And His call is ever the upward call.

But we read also that "The serpent said." And on this first page of human history, too, the devil spoke. And his call was the downward call. It was so then. It is so today, for the devil still speaks. He is still here. He seeks today to do what he has ever sought to do in the historic yesterday, to blight and to damn and to destroy. I know that this is not exactly the faith of the modern world. But the Bible very clearly teaches the reality of a personal God. It also just as clearly teaches the reality of a personal agency of evil. And the sane and candid Christ was not above saying that He Himself had encountered this personality known as the devil, and had fought with him in the wilderness. "The serpent said"—and he still has his say. His slime is upon every page of human history. His fang sticks out among all its flowers. Though we are tempted to scout the idea and to laugh at it—

Men don't believe in the devil today,
As their fathers used to do;
They have forced the door of the widest creed
To let His Majesty through.

There's not a mark of his cloven foot,
Or a fiery dart from his bow
To be found in the earth or the air today—
For men have voted it so.

But who is making the fatal draft,
That palsies heart and brain,
And fills the world each passing year
With ten hundred thousand slain?

Who dogs the steps of the toiling saint,
And digs a pit for his feet;
And sows his tares in the Field of Time,
Wherever God sows His wheat?

The devil is voted not to be,—
And of course it must be true;
But I wonder who's doing the kind of work
The devil alone should do.

Temptation is here. Temptation must be faced and fought by every one of us. That is the first fact that comes out in this old story. You may resent the fact that man has to be tempted, you may blame God for it, as some do—but before you do please consider this fact, that temptation is not in itself an evil. Temptation simply means the power of choice. If man has the privilege of ascending he must also have the privilege of descending. If there is in him an ability to obey there must also be an ability to disobey. If he has within him powers to soar he must also be gifted with those fatal powers that will make it possible for him to grovel and crawl in the dust.

The truth of the matter is, that God has no other way of making a man than by giving him the power to choose for himself. And that power involves temptation. A man may inherit a good environment. He may inherit pure blood, but there is one something that he can not inherit, and that is the most priceless of all things—he can not inherit character. That must be achieved. The fine glory of Christlikeness we must, each of us, in the power of God, attain for ourselves. Now, it is by temptation met and fought and overcome that we attain. It may be that you would like an easier way, but an easy path is never a man-making path. It

is in our battle with the difficult that our thews become strong with the strength of steel.

Do you remember the story of the armor of Hercules? He wore upon his head and shoulders the skin of a Numidian lion. This skin protected him from the cold. It was also a shield against the weapons of his enemies. Where did he obtain this treasure? He had slain the lion with his own hand. It was his first great encounter and he had won. And the strength of the lion had therefore become his strength.

The Bible has a similar story. You remember how the love-sick Samson went a-courting. And do you remember the lion that roared against him? He fought the lion and conquered. And what was the result? One day he passed that road and his hands were full of honey. Where had he found it? In the carcass of the lion. So that he put that riddle to his enemies: "Out of the eater came forth meat." He had become strong with the strength of his antagonist. And so we become strong not by the difficulties that we avoid, but by the difficulties that we meet and overcome.

Do you consider it a calamity that your son is having a bit of a hard time? Do you think it a misfortune that in his effort to get through college he has to battle not alone with ignorance, but with poverty as well? Believe me, the young man that is to be pitied is the one that is finding everything dead easy. He may get a living but the chances are he will never get a life. Milton was right—"I can not praise the fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies forth to meet its adversary, where garlands are to be run for not without heat and dust." You may allow temptation to work your ruin, but it is meant to

work your perfection. Therefore James says—"Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."

Now, one great danger of temptation is always the guise in which it comes. In the text it is represented as coming in the guise of a serpent. That means that temptation is tricky. It glides into our lives. It does not sound a trumpet to let you know that it is coming. It does not wave a red flag in your face. It lies in wait for you and takes you by surprise. It is like a serpent. It is a writhing, living thing that may poison. The serpent—it is tricky. "It lies as if dead for half a year and then it suddenly awakes. And when it is awake it can outswim the fish, and outclimb the monkey, and outleap the zebra, and outwrestle the athlete and crush the tiger."

Dr. Trumbull tells us of going to a certain theater in London where some trained animals were to exhibit. Among them there was a great snake thirty-five feet in length. The trainer of that snake got possession of him when he was only some three feet long. He had played with him for many months. And tonight amidst weird, oriental music he glided upon the stage to meet his master. He coiled around his master from head to foot, as he had done hundreds of times before. But this time the lifted head got for a moment out of line with the man's vision so that he no longer looked the snake eye to eye. There was a scream and the man dropped upon the floor with almost every bone in his body crushed. Temptation is serpentlike.

It begins in this old story very innocently. There is a question on its lips. "Do you mean to tell me," said the serpent, "that you can not eat of the fruit of this particular tree? Do you really think that it is

wrong to do this innocent looking thing?" That is the way sin starts. After we have become hardened in sin we would say, "Yes, I know it's wrong, but I'll do it anyway." But in the beginning the tempter muddies the water. In the beginning he seeks to make us morally color blind. He raises the question. He says, "What's wrong with this?"

Now, that is dangerous if for no other reason than that it focuses our attention upon the forbidden. We come to look at the one thing that we want to do and can not, instead of the million things that we can do. Did you ever read of that oriental palace that was builded of the finest possible material? Did you read how its walls "were lined with marble white and black, like the mingling of night and morning? Did you read of its costly rugs and its magic tapestry? But when one day the proud owner was showing it to his friend, the friend told him that to make it perfect he needed a roc's egg to swing from the ceiling. And from thenceforth the palace became a bit of a madhouse to its owner because his attention was always fixed on the one thing that was wanting, instead of upon the million things of beauty that were already his.

Then, there is a fascination in the forbidden simply because it is forbidden. You remember the story of Blue Beard. The wife had the liberty of every room in the king's palace except the Blue Closet. But the Blue Closet was all that she wanted to see and she could not keep the key out of the lock. That is part of the fascination of the circus to the small boy. Great wagons go by with one little grated window, and the marvelous animal inside is prohibited to his gaze and left to his quick imagination.

From raising a doubt the tempter next passes on to a positive assertion. "Do you say that if you should do a trivial thing like eating an apple, do you mean to tell me that an insignificant something like the breaking of God's law would mean death?" And he throws his head back in irrepressible laughter. "Why, you innocent little child," he said, "how easily duped you are! Why, it won't mean death. 'You shall not surely die.' Sin is not deadly. Wrongdoing is not fatal. Rebellion against God is not disastrous. I am surprised that you believe God and the Sunday school teachers and the preachers. The stupidity of your innocence amazes me."

What do you think of sin? Do you consider it deadly? I heard a man say the other day, a big strong man, as he spoke of a certain sin, "I'm afraid of it." I heard an earnest preacher say recently in speaking of sin in general, "I'm afraid." Are you? Some of us are not. "Fools," the Bible tells us, "make a mock of sin." They are not afraid. They say, "Oh, it won't matter a hundred years from now. It will all come out in the wash."

"Sin is not deadly," says the devil. "Sin is not deadly," says the modern scoffer. "Sin is not deadly," says the happy-go-lucky church member. "Sin is not deadly," say the prayerless father and mother. "Sin is not deadly," says the young man as he takes his first step down. And into our hands we take this prussic acid labeled with the skulls of countless men and scores of nations, and we quaff it with laughter to find our laughter choked in death.

"Instead of sin being deadly, as you think in your ignorant innocence, it is really a great boon. It will

make you wise. Sin, and you will have the knowledge of good and of evil." And sin does bring knowledge. I am not denying that. And we say, "Knowledge is power," do we not? But mark me, whether knowledge is power depends upon the things we know. Knowledge of God, right knowledge, is power. But knowledge of sin is never power. It never can be. The mightiest man this world ever saw was Jesus Christ, and the secret of His might was this, that "He knew no sin."

Is knowledge of sin power? Ask Samson, as with blinded eyes and broken heart, he grinds in the prison house. Is knowledge of sin power? Ask Clarence Richardson, the one-time minister, as he waits for the executioner in the death cell. Is knowledge of sin power? Ask a million burnt out and blighted men and women who walk scarred and handcuffed among the common ways of life today.

Oh, it is strange beyond all words that any man would expect to find power and freedom in lawlessness, but somehow we do. And we have been believing this devil's lie since the birth of history. There are those today who pin their faith to political lawlessness. And we call them anarchists and bolshevists. Then there are those who pin their faith to moral lawlessness and become anarchists in rebellion against the Kingship of God.

Man, don't let the devil deceive you. Every law of God is written for your good, not for His. "Thou shalt have none other gods before me"—why? Because men rot down under the dominion of polytheism. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain"—why? Because it leads to profanity, and profanity means an unfenced life, a life that is the

galloping ground of every form of sin. "Thou shalt not kill"—why? It is to protect you from your brother's dagger. It is to protect him from the mark of Cain. "Thou shalt not commit adultery"—it is the fence that God puts around your home and my home. It is the fence that He puts around the individual life to keep him from becoming that most corruptible and disreputable scoundrel that will ever creep into the dark hell.

Now, this woman was very like you and me in that she believed the devil. The devil succeeded with her because he destroyed her faith. Mark you, she did not have to fall. Temptation is a part of God's plan for you, but sin is not. She did not have to yield any more than you have to yield. She yielded because she wanted to. She yielded because she ceased to believe God. She did not think that He told the truth when He said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." She thought He was trying to beat her out of her rights, that He did not love her because He would not let her do as she pleased. That is the way children sometimes feel about their parents. That is the way we big children feel about God.

So she took the plunge. Did she find the word of God true or the word of the devil? You know. She found that it was true, horribly true, that sin meant death. Oh, it is not an old wives' fable. Is not that what the young woman left written who was found sometime ago dead in the arms of her guilty lover? "We have found," she said, "Fred and I, that the wages of sin is death, yea, many times worse than death—hell on earth."

Eve found that God was true. Sin means death, not

at some far-off time, but here and now. When sin enters a life death treads close upon its heels. When sin enters then and there sets in a fatal tuberculosis of the soul, a damning rotting down of the moral nature. That is true because sin separates from God. The day that this woman sinned she lost God. The One she should have loved she came to fear and to dread and to hate. And I am talking to scores who have exactly this attitude toward God at this moment. When you think of God it is not of one who is a father. It is not of one who is saying, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort thee." You think of Him as a judge, as one who condemns you. What has made this attitude? Sin.

And sin not only separated this woman from God, it made her the means of separating the man who loved her. We can not sin alone, you and I. When we go wrong somebody tracks us. This woman's children were born outside Eden when they might have been born in the immediate presence of God. The mother is ever the dominant factor in the making of the home. I am not excusing the father. And God pity that home where the mother is a godless woman.

This woman lost the fight. Maybe you have lost it. If you have, remember that it need not be your final loss. God at once came with the question, "Where art thou," because he wanted to win them back, because, in spite of their sin, He loved them still. He came at once with the promise of a coming Saviour and with a prophecy of perpetual warfare between the seed of the woman and the serpent who had tempted her.

And thank God that the prophecy has been true through all the centuries. Man has sinned, but he

has never ceased to fight. He has gone into the Far Country, but he has never been able to be content here. The call of God has always made him restless. It has always disturbed him. It has always wooed him. And it comes wooingly to you and me tonight. And I am wondering if, even though we have failed, we will not renew the conflict. I wonder if we will not in the here and now put our hands in the hand of Him who is "able to make us more than conquerors through Him that loved us and gave Himself for us." Try Him and you will find that He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

THE HEROIC HIGHWAYMAN

LUKE, 23:42

You will find the text of the evening in Luke, twenty-third chapter and forty-second verse: "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." The man who prayed this prayer was a highway robber. He was a Knight of the Road. Even now he is dying the death of a rebel and of a murderer, and yet I believe you will agree with me that this highwayman is no ordinary man. I believe when you take into consideration the circumstances under which he prayed this prayer, you will be convinced that he is one of the most daring thinkers and one of the most heroic men of which history gives us an account.

Look at the situation. It is a holiday in Jerusalem some nineteen centuries ago. Great out-of-town multitudes throng the streets of the city. Rome is going to execute three prisoners today. She has chosen this day because she desires the largest number of spectators possible. She will let her subjects see what it means to rebel. In this way she will make rebellion tremble and hide its face even in the most distant parts of the Empire.

And the crowd is hideously eager to witness this bloody show. Men have always liked the gruesome. I suppose in a measure they always will. Even today we like to see things that are dangerous. We like to

watch people flirt with death. If there is a daring auto race, if there is an especially dangerous feat to be performed in an airship—multitudes will gather to see. We are still blood brothers of those who used to watch the gladiators fight in the arena years ago. We are still kin to those who witness the bull fight of the Spanish countries to this day. We love things that are bloody, gruesome, horrible.

The crowd is the more eager to see this show because the three men who are to die are well known. Two of them are highwaymen. They were men who had begun possibly by being zealous patriots, but being unable to gather an army and fight in the open, they had banded themselves together into a robber clan. They had homed in the fastnesses of the mountains and had preyed upon the passersby as ruthlessly as they felt that Rome had preyed upon themselves. They were not unpopular men, I dare say. On the contrary, they were possibly thoroughly popular. They were looked upon as heroes. Had they not dared all to plague and to vex the common enemy, Rome? We are not entirely successful in holding back our admiration from men of the Jesse James type in our own day, though he had far less excuse for going upon the road than did these men.

The other man who is to die has come into prominence in an altogether different way. He has preached in their synagogues, taught in their Temple. He has touched lepers into purity. He has opened blinded eyes and raised the dead. He has shown Himself a religious leader and teacher of marvelous power. For this reason some have loved Him with a love stronger than death. For this reason also others have hated Him with a hatred that will not endure His being on the earth.

As the procession moves out from the Roman praetorium down the narrow streets, there is much more in the appearance of the robbers to appeal to the vulgar crowd than in the appearance of Jesus. The robbers walk jauntily forward under the weight of their wooden crosses, for they are "lithe and sinewy and hard as nails." They seem unafraid. Like men they have fought. Like men they are determined to die. The other man seems almost utterly spent. His cross is more than He can bear. He has just passed through a horrible night. He has been crowned with thorns and His back has been hideously gashed by the Roman scourge. He has lost much blood and is weak, so weak that before the end of the journey another has to carry His cross.

Arrived upon a weird skull-shaped hill outside the city gates, the four soldiers in charge of each prisoner perform the work of execution. The victims are stripped bare. A vessel of highly medicated wine is passed among them. This wine is to deaden the pain. For even in that iron age when the heart of the world was far from being tender, this poor boon was not denied even to the worst of criminals. The robbers drink, but Jesus refuses. He will meet death fully awake.

Then the victims are stretched prone upon the cross, spikes are driven into palms and insteps and the crosses are dropped into the holes that have been dug for them. There is a spray of blood, the tearing of flesh, the straining of tendons—and then these three trees so lately planted stand laden with their fruit of infinite pain.

The soldiers now make themselves as comfortable as possible at the foot of the cross and begin dice throwing

and drinking. For death by crucifixion is such a slow-footed monster that they must needs amuse themselves while their victims die.

Now it is that the jeers and the scorn and the revilings of the crowd break out in their most blasphemous intensity. I can well imagine that the robbers, to whom little of it was directed, would have replied in kind. They had nothing to fear. Rome had already done its worst. They had reached the end of the trail. But to the amazement of at least one of these robbers, the one who is the butt of the bitterest mockings does not reply at all except to throw round the shoulders of those who are murdering Him "the sheltering folds of this protecting prayer:" "God, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Now, a scene that will soften one man will often harden another. Two men attend the same service and hear the same sermon. One man has his heart broken by it. Under the spell of it he finds his way to the cross. The other is only made the more hard, the more stubborn, the more bitter and indifferent. This was the case with these two robbers. The attitude of Jesus seems to have maddened the lesser robber beyond endurance. I think he would like to have hit Him in the face. As it was, he railed on Him.

But on the greater robber the impression was exactly the opposite. As he had watched Jesus on His way to the cross and upon the cross he had become convinced that He was an innocent man. He had been impressed by His perfection. So deep and genuine is this impression that the howls of the mob and the taunts of the churchmen and the revilings of his companion are becoming almost unbearable. They pain him, I think,

more than the nails upon which he hangs. At last he can contain himself no longer, but turning as best he can to his companion, he says, "Dost thou not fear God seeing thou art in the same condemnation? But we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our crimes. But this man has done nothing amiss."

Look at the insight of it, and the daring. Rome has declared Jesus guilty. The religious leaders of His day have declared Him guilty. The mob has declared Him guilty. Gray beards of the church are even now declaring Him guilty. But these jeers and howls and false sentences can not disguise from this discerning man the truth. There steals into his heart an absolute conviction of the snow-whiteness of this man who is dying at his side.

Then you will notice that that happened which always happens when a man comes to realize the presence of Jesus. When this robber had realized the spotlessness of the man at his side he became conscious at once of his own spottedness, of his own guilt, of the stains upon his own soul. Against that white background he sees himself in all his moral ugliness. And he cries, as he endures the very pangs of hell: "Justly, justly. I am suffering, but I deserve every pang that I suffer. I am guilty. Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this even in thy sight."

This man is on the way to victory. He dares face his own sin. Now, he might have taken another course. He might have nodded his head at his companion over there and said, "I am a sinner, it's true, but I am no worse than that man. He has been my companion in crime." He might have pointed out distinguished churchmen in the crowd and have said, "I am a saint

beside that old hypocrite yonder with soul mummified and heart utterly dead." But men never get far in that way. It is only as we face our own sin and hate it and forsake it that we find salvation.

One of the dangers of this day is a lost sense of sin. We have lost our sense of sin because we have lost our sense of God. The man who sees God sees himself as one guilty and defiled. Isaiah was one of the best men of his day, but when he caught a vision of his Lord he put his lips in the dust and cried, "Unclean! unclean!" Job was a high toned and moral man. But at the vision of his holy Lord he abhorred himself in dust and ashes.

There is no surer rebuke than the rebuke of a stainless life. Many a man who will never be convinced by our preaching might be convinced by our living. Sam Hadley met a beautiful woman of the street one night. She said, "Go home with me." He said, "No, you go with me." She went, and to her amazement he carried her and introduced her to his wife. They talked together a while. She was very restless and soon declared that she must go. Mrs. Hadley got her wrap for her, put it round her shoulders and gathered her in her arms and kissed her. And the woman of sin sobbed, but she never left. Her heart had been broken at the revelation of her own self that had come to her in the light of this good woman's life.

This robber saw himself. He saw himself as a man in need, as a man sin-stained and hastening on to the second death. And he reached out his hand for help in this wonderful prayer: "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." It was not a coward's prayer. It was not the prayer of one who has insulted a million chances and who now calls on God not because

he loves goodness, but because he wants to dodge a penalty.

There are people like that. This smaller robber was on that order. He said, "If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us." He is only interested in escaping the penalty. He is only praying as you prayed when you thought you were going to die. He is only calling on God as you called on Him during the storm. That sort of praying is born not of love of goodness nor love of Gd. It is born simply of slavish fear. It is the prayer of a coward.

But whatever else this man was, I say, he was no coward. Will you notice this, he dared take the part of Jesus before he took his own. Before he asked Jesus to help him, he did all that was in his power to help Jesus. He tried to defend Him from the howling mob. He did the best that he could to put his torn and tortured body between Jesus and those who were tormenting Him. Do you think that was easy?

It was not easy. When that robber did that, he put himself in a crowd absolutely by himself. He stood utterly alone. There was not another man in all the wide world that dared speak for Jesus and defend Him at that moment. Every disciple has forsaken Him. The women stand in the distance and sob in silence. The churchmen jeer at Him. And Rome crucifies Him. Only one man dares to defend Him, dares to speak for Him. Millions will rally to Him in other years, I know, but let us honor this man who dared befriend his Lord when all others had forsaken Him. Let us honor the courage and devotion of him, who uttered the last kindly and tender words that ever gladdened the ear of the dying Son of God on this side of the grave.

Then look at the faith of this man. He calls Jesus "Lord." Did ever a man exercise such marvelous faith? Some of you have never called Him "Lord," in spite of the fact that He has come to you as the Christ who has been the mold of history. You have never called Him "Lord" though you were reared in a Christian home. You have never called Him "Lord," though you had a godly father and a praying mother. This man called Him "Lord."

He called Him "Lord" in the most trying of all possible circumstances. Peter called Him "Lord" when he had witnessed His miraculous power in the draught of fishes. Thomas called Him "Lord" when He had shown him the hands that had throttled death and hell and the grave. Paul called Him "Lord" when he had seen Him risen with a resplendent glory that had smitten him blind. But this man called Him "Lord" when to the crowd He seemed even less lordly than the reviling robber by whom He hung.

There was a sign above His head: "Jesus, the King of the Jews." That was the joke of the day. Nothing was matter for deeper scorn and derision than that word. This dying man a king! But to this clear-eyed robber the superscription was no fiction. He saw in this man the King Eternal. Hear him: "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." How sure he is of His kingship! He doesn't say, "Remember me *if* thou comest." We might at least have expected him to put it that way if he had considered Him a king at all. But his faith goes far beyond that. He said, "*When* thou comest." Not "if you happen to outride this storm, remember me," but "I know, Lord, that your victory is sure. So when you come in your

kingdom remember this poor robber who hung with you on the nails."

Was ever a faith so wonderful? There is the King and He has no throne but a cross. He has no crown but the thorn marks. He has no scepter save the nails that pinion His hands. He has no retinue but a jeering and howling mob. His whole royal wardrobe is in the hands of the Roman crap shooters. And yet this man penetrates the disguise of nakedness and the disguise of shame, and even the dusky disguise of death itself, and sees in Him the King Eternal, whose head is to be crowned with many crowns.

Notice, too, that he believes this King is able to grant favors beyond death. He believes that this dying Lord is the very Lord of Life. Think of it—this robber is dying. He knows it. He is fisticuffing now with the last grim enemy. The man at his side is dying more rapidly than himself. He knows that, too. Yet dying robber unto dying Christ speaks of life. And in the gloaming of the night of death he lays plans with Him for eternity. I tell you the faith that sent martyrs to the stake, the faith that removes mountains into the depths of the sea is but child's play in comparison with the faith of this man.

"Lord, remember me"—mark you, that he does not ask for a throne. He does not ask, as the sons of Zebedee, for a place on His right hand or His left. He somehow feels that one thought of this dying man will be enough for him for time and for eternity. And so he says, "Lord, remember me."

Did Christ hear that heroic prayer? Did He listen to this dying man who appealed to Him in the hour of His sorest agony? Yes. He heard him. He heard

him and gave to him an answer. And there is no sweeter word that ever fell from His lips: "Verily I say unto thee, today thou shalt be with me in paradise."

We would be much poorer every way if we did not have this word. Hear what a marvelous light it throws upon the immediacy of salvation. How long does it take Christ to save a man? How long does it take Him to snap his fetters and break his chains? How long does it take Jesus to make the worst of men clean and unspotted in His sight? How much time is required before this sinful human heart of mine can become a sharer in the divine nature? Answer: It may be done instantly. In the quickness of the lightning's flash I may be reborn. I may this instant become a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Some people laugh at instantaneous conversion. They want to save the world by a process of evolution, but evolution would have been a poor remedy for this dying man. He needs salvation now. And that is just the salvation that Christ had and has to offer. "Now is the accepted time and today is the day of salvation." "Today shalt thou be with me," He says. And that was his birthday. And this may be yours, however far in sin you may have gone. Today you may be with Jesus. Tonight you may leave this church in the sweetness of His fellowship.

This answer of our Lord also throws a flood of light upon the grounds upon which we may hope to meet Jesus in peace by and by. "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Why? For the simple reason that this dying robber has begun by being with Jesus in the here and now. He has just claimed a present salvation; therefore it is perfectly reasonable for him to expect a

future salvation. He has come to know Jesus personally here; therefore he has sure grounds for hoping to meet Him and know Him yonder.

And there is no other sure basis of hope. Do not, I beg you, expect salvation at the hands of the cemetery. Do not hope for redemption through the power of the coffin and the shroud. There is one, and only one who saves—"There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." And if this Jesus can not save you in the here and now, then He can not save you at all. But if He can and does save you now, He can and will save you forever more.

"Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise"—where is that? I do not know. What is it? It is the abode of Jesus and those who have trusted in Him. I take it, it is Heaven. And He makes this place very sure to us. He asserts upon His very oath that this dying robber is going to be with Him in Paradise. Then, there is a Heaven. There is a place where love shall find its own. There is a land where God shall take us upon His great mother lap and wipe away all tears from our eyes.

"Thou shalt be with me"—this man had become a sharer in the nature of Christ. As best he could, he had shared in His shame, and now he is going to share in His glory. He is going immediately. He is going today. He is with Christ now. He will be with Him forever more.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers nor things present, nor things to come,

"Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Therefore I beg you to lay hold on Jesus tonight, that you may claim Him for your Savior now and forever more.

us gird ourselves with a mighty faith, let us brace our hearts with a high and holy self-esteem, let us be gripped with a mighty earnestness that will make us glad of any sacrifice. We will enter our Canaan and possess our possessions in no other way.

The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain:
His blood-red banner streams afar;
Who follows in his train?

THE LOST BOOK

II CHRONICLES, 34: 14

Housecleaning was going on in Jerusalem. The house that was being cleaned was the Temple. Among the multitudinous rubbish that was discovered was a book, a book that had been lost for so long that its message was in large measure forgotten. A book it was too whose finding at once made a difference in the lives of those who read it. Some sort of a reform was at once set in motion by it.

Now, this book is not the only one that has ever been lost. The truth of the matter is, that we have been losing books ever since the birth of literature. Sometimes we lose them through some great disaster, like the burning of the Library of Alexandria. Here hundreds of thousands of volumes were lost in a very few hours. But books are not only lost through some great catastrophe—the process of losing them is one that goes on continuously. Books are in a measure like men—they are born, they speak their message and have their day, and cease to be. Emerson tells us that the lifetime of the average novel in his day was only nine months. They often live a still shorter time now. Books of science last but little longer; books of history and other kinds of literature but little longer still. We outgrow our books as individuals and as a race somewhat as a child outgrows its toys.

We do not enjoy the games and the pastimes today that we enjoyed as small children. We do not cherish the same ambitions and ideals that we cherished then. We do not read the same books. We have outgrown them. We do not consult the same authorities when we want information. For it comes to pass again and again that in the ever-enlarging horizon of man's knowledge the wisdom of yesterday is the folly of today, and the knowledge of yesterday is the ignorance of today.

But there is one book that the world has never outgrown. It speaks to the needs of our day, and of all days, as if written peculiarly for that time. And yet it is one of the oldest of books. "It was born of divine seed, planted in human soil," many centuries ago. It waxed strong under the prophet's mantle and grew to its maturity on missionary journeys and upon the isle of apocalyptic vision. It is an old book, but though so old, it is the newest and the freshest and most vigorous single piece of literature in the world today. It has a message for the individual and for the race that is both timely and timeless. Men have never outgrown it. They never will. It is a book that no nation has ever been able to keep house adequately without.

In the story before us the Jews lost their Bible. Of course it was only a small fragment of the Bible we know, but that loss was disastrous in its results. During the days in which the Book was lost sin began to weave the scourges that finally whipped them away into exile. It was in these days of a forgotten and lost Book that sin began the placing of those bombs which in later years blasted the foundation from underneath the nation.

Mr. Moody calls attention to the fact that before

the outbreak of the French Revolution France spent millions of money sowing down her people with atheistic literature. They thought the Bible stood in the way of their progress, and they threw it overboard. The Book came in very large measure to be a lost book, but with the loss of the Bible they lost much besides. They lost that which made it possible for half the children of Paris for a time to be born out of wedlock. They lost that which made it possible for as high as ten thousand newborn babies to be fished out of the sewers in one single year.

What are the great progressive countries of our present day? They are the countries where the Bible is an open book. Why the great difference between the United States and Mexico and our sister nations of South America? The difference is in some measure racial, I am ready to admit, but that does not fully account for it. The big difference grows out of this fact, that in the countries of Latin America the Bible is almost wholly a lost book while we ourselves are, at least to some extent, a Bible reading and a Bible-guided people. And I am confident that if the day ever comes when America ceases to be so that the sun of her national greatness will set forever.

Now, while America is, to some extent a Bible-reading and a Bible guided country, there are multitudes even in America to whom the Bible is in large measure a lost book. The benefits they receive from it are indirect benefits. They no longer read it. They no longer make it the companion of their leisure hours. They no longer renew their energies by feeding upon its bracing truth. They no longer read it to their children. They do not study it in the Sunday School.

Vast numbers do not attend, and multitudes of those who do attend do not study the lesson.

So it comes to pass that so far as many of us are individually concerned the Bible is a lost book. We have not read a chapter in it intelligently for the past six months. The ignorance of the ordinary individual about the Bible is one of the appalling facts of today. This ignorance is not confined to those who do not attend church and Sunday School. It is not confined to the ignorant and uneducated. It spreads its appalling darkness over all sorts and conditions of people.

In one of our state universities a freshman class of one hundred and thirty-nine members was given an examination on the Bible. The passing mark was 75. The questions were of this nature:

1. What is the pentateuch?
2. Name ten books of the Old Testament.
3. "Parading for a mess of pottage," what is the reference?
4. Who was the Apostle to the Gentiles,
5. What was Jonah's gourd?

And other simple questions. Only twelve of the one hundred and thirty-nine passed. The average for the class was only 40 per cent.

I am told that a certain literary society in England offered a prize some years ago for the best short story. One member of the club copied the Book of Esther word for word, changing only the names of the characters and the historic setting. He won the prize, and when the president presented the medal he marveled where the man developed such a wonderful literary style.

The average individual is ignorant of the Bible,

appallingly ignorant. It is said that a college professor in the course of an English class came upon the word "epistles." "By the way," said he, "what are the epistles?" And for a moment all the air a solemn stillness held. Then one man raised his hand. "Good," said the professor, "I am glad somebody knows. Will you tell us, please?" Then came the answer: "I am not sure that I know myself, but I think they were the apostles' wives."

Every man ought to be interested in the Bible for at least three reasons. First, he ought to be interested in the Bible from the standpoint of literature. It is the greatest single piece of literature in existence. If you love biography you ought to read the Bible. There are no biographies that make us so intimately acquainted with their heroes as do those of this Book. Boswell does not acquaint us any more fully with his great Dr. Johnson than does the Bible with Abraham, and with Jacob and David, and in a few short pages. We know these men better than we know our next door neighbors. We know their virtues. All biographers will tell us that about their heroes. We also know their weaknesses, their vices, their failures, their sins. We know the men as they were, what they thought, how they felt, how they battled, how they sought God and found Him, how they sinned against God and lost Him. If you love biography read the Bible.

If you love philosophy read the Bible. Jean Jacques Rousseau says, "All other philosophy is contemptible in comparison with it." And he was a man of no natural partiality toward the Book.

Do you love oratory? Then read the Bible. Webster said, "If there is anything of eloquence in me, it

is because I learned the Bible at my mother's knee." Some months ago I was called upon to speak before a school of oratory on "The Oratory of the Bible." I was amazed at the wealth of material I had at my disposal. Take the marvelous oration found in the twenty-sixth chapter of Acts. You would have to go far before you find one more gripping and more mighty.

Do you love drama? Then read the Bible. The most marvelous dramas ever written are to be found there. Take the story of the Rich Fool or the story of Dives and Lazarus, or above all else, the parable of the Prodigal Son. Edwin Booth said that this parable was the greatest drama ever written.

Do you love poetry? Then I commend this Book to you. The greatest epic ever written is in the Bible. That is not my opinion simply, but that of that great master of English, Thomas Carlyle. He said, "There is nothing in the Bible or out of it to compare with it. Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation, oldest choral melody as of the heart, quiet as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars."

Do you love songs, songs expressive of the highest heights of human joy and of the deepest depths of woe? Then read the marvelous songs of the Bible. They have in them the sobbings of a desolate child that has lost its way. They have in them also the rapturous music of one who has found his way back into the light, and who is being undergirded with the Everlasting Arms. Oh, if you love great literature, and everybody should love it—then read the Bible.

Then you ought to be familiar with the Bible in the second place, because you can not understand the best of modern literature without knowing it. The works

of the greatest modern masters are literally saturated with the Bible. You could almost make a small Bible with the gleanings from Tennyson and Browning and Shakespeare and Ruskin and Carlyle. These men brought their choicest water from this mountain spring. They found their fairest flowers in this colorful garden. They digged for their most resplendent jewels in this inexhaustible mine. So much is this the case that to read them intelligently you must know something of the Bible.

But the third and last big reason why everybody ought to be familiar with the Bible is that it is a Book of the heart. It is God's revelation of Himself to the human soul. The Bible will make you wise about many things if you will study it carefully, but its big purpose is this, to make you wise unto salvation. It shows you who God is, what He thinks, how He feels about you and me, how He feels about sin and how He feels about righteousness. No man can read the Bible intelligently and candidly without turning away from it with a new conception of God.

This is the one great purpose of the Book. This is what unifies it and combines its sixty-six volumes into one book. On the surface it is not a unit. It was written by some forty different men. These men belonged to every station in society from ploughmen and shepherds up to prime ministers and kings. These men were not only separated from each other by every possible social distinction, but they were separated by fifteen centuries in time. And yet the different volumes they give us combine into one great book.

When you open its pages the fact of its unity does

not at first impress you. In truth it seems anything but a unit. "We are plunged," as Dr. Watson tells us, "into an ocean of detail. The love affairs of a man and a maid and contracts of marriage; the quarrels between brothers with their treachery and their revenge; the bargains in business, wherein land is bought and sold, and covenants are made with witnesses; the feuds between rival tribes, enlivened by raids and captures; the choice of kings and their anointing amid the rejoicing of the people; the evil doing of kings and their assassination amid a people's hatred; the orations of statesmen as they warn their nation against offending God, or comfort them in days of tribulation; adroit arrangements of ecclesiastics, and the inner history of church councils; the collision of parties in the Christian Church, and the bitter rivalries which distract congregations; the radiant record of deeds of chivalry, and the black story of acts of treachery—the romance of unselfish friendship, and the blind enmity of religious bigotry; the career of a successful man and the unmerited suffering of a martyr; the devotion of a mother to her child, and the jealousy of women fighting for the same man's love; the idyll of childhood; the strength of young manhood, the mellow wisdom of old age—nomads of the desert, dwellers in the city; prophets and sages, ploughmen and vine-dressers, soldiers and traders, rich men and beggars, holy matrons and women who are sinners; patriarchs driving huge herds before them, and apostles going forth with nothing in their hands; priests offering sacrifice in the holy place, and publicans collecting their gains in the receipt of custom; scholars busy in their studies, and carpenters toiling in their

shop—all pass across this stage in unarranged and natural procession. Nothing could be more artless, nothing more fascinating.

But as we read this many volumed story there comes to us a growing vision of the face of God. We see Him ever clearer till we pass out of the Old Testament into high uplands of the New, where He who in time past spake to us through the prophets, at last speaks to us through His Son. And as we see the face that looks out upon us from the Gospels, we know what God is like.

It is therefore a saving Book. It saves by showing us God. And here, let me say, it stands alone. If God has not made a revelation to us through His Book, we have no revelation. This is a wonderful world in which we live. Far be it from me to despise its multitudinous beauties. But when I ask it for knowledge about a loving and forgiving God, it gives me no answer.

The depths saith, "It is not in me." And the stars say, "It is not in me." And the flowers say, "It is not in me." Nature never forgives, and she has nothing to say to me of a God who forgives. I know that one has said,

Earth's crammed with Heaven,
And every common bush aflame with God.

I know there was one who could find in the "meanest flower that blows thoughts that lie too deep for tears." But these were people who carried minds saturated with the truth of the Bible to their seeing. Nature alone can not tell us of God, or else it would not be true, as it is true, that "Where every prospect pleases only man is vile."

Oh, if you are hungry to know God, read the Bible. It is authority in that realm. That is the secret of its marvelous power. That is the reason why it is such a convicting power. If you want men to be convicted of sin, give them the Bible. It is the hammer that breaks the rock in pieces.

That is the secret of its converting power. If you want men reborn, give them the Bible—"Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever."

That is the secret of its sustaining and upbuilding power—"I commend you to God and the word of His grace, which is able to build you up." How weak and anaemic many Christians are! How sickly and dyspeptic! They have no appetite for the Word. Therefore they do not feed on the Bible. But wherever you find a strong Christian you are going to find a Bible reading Christian. Jeremiah who had to stand alone for so many years, said, "Thy words were found and I did eat them, and they became the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Most of us are weak because we are literally starving for the Word.

This ignorance too accounts for the readiness of many of us to take up any new fad that comes parading by in the stolen garb of religion. This is the reason so many are ready to swallow any sort of nostrum that the modern religious quack chooses to dose out. Who are the church people, for instance, who go off after that insidious piece of insanity known as Christian Science? They are not Bible nourished people. Those who feed daily and deeply on God's Word would never be taken in by this pathetic imposture. I know many of them come to read the Bible after they become

Scientists with a devotion that should shame many of us. But they bring to it a warped mind. Had they read it with equal fidelity when they were members of a Christian Church, they would never have been wooed from their Christian faith. They would never have accepted as authority a female fakir who brazenly contradicts over and over again the fundamental truths of the Bible.

I beg you then to give this Book a large place in your life. I beg you to appreciate it more, to love it better, to read it with greater diligence, to teach it to your children. You ought to appreciate it, in the first place, because of the cost of the Book. It is cheap now. You can buy a Bible for a dollar easy enough, but it has come to you at a great price. God's sons have suffered for this Book. They have suffered as you and I will never know. For this Book has been hated as well as loved. If you turn its pages intelligently you will see them stained with the blood of those who have died for the blessed volume. If you turn its pages you will discover upon them the dank mold of dismal dungeons where men have rotted in their effort to give you this Book. If you shake it you will see fall from its pages the gray ashes of those who have burned at the stake that this unspeakable gift might gather dust upon your center table. We ought to appreciate it more. It has come to us at a great price.

We ought to appreciate the Bible, in the second place, because of the marvelous influence of the Book. Wherever it has gone the night has begun to give place to day. Wherever it has gone light has sprung up. Wherever it has gone society has become more just, more kind, more intelligent and more free. Through the

years it has been a message of glad tidings to the poor. It has been a means by which God has opened the eyes of the blind, and has set at liberty them that were bound. John Richard Greene tells us that England was remade by the King James' Version of the Bible. Under its influence, he tells us, that the whole nation became a church. The Bible, where it is read, has been, and is still, the remaker of national life.

I beseech you to appreciate this Book because of its blessed influence on individual life. A monument stands in New York today to a man who was once the meanest river thief that ever vexed the police force of New York. The name of that man was Jerry McAuley. One day when Jerry McAuley was in jail somebody who believed in the might of God's Word, slipped a New Testament through the prison bars to him. He read it. He was born again "not of corruptible seed, but by the Word of God." He came out of prison to rescue thousands of men and women from the slums of New York that today walk Heaven's streets with him.

And there is no book like this Book to take with you if you are going where people are in distress. There is no book like this Book to take to those who are lonely, who are in need, who have burdens that they are not able to carry, who have more heartache than they know how to manage.

I was visiting here in Washington the other day. I went to see a sick woman. She was dying of tuberculosis. When I had introduced myself she did not seem at all glad to see me. In fact, she seemed just the contrary.

"Who sent you here?" she asked angrily. I did not tell her. Then she said, "You can go right on back.

I can get all the preachers to come to see me that I want to. If I want you I'll send for you."

But I didn't leave. I talked right on as if she had given me welcome. I saw that she was sick and fretful as a little child. "Do you ever get lonesome," I asked. "Yes," she said, and there was less of anger in her voice. "Do you ever wake up in the night and cough and wish that you had a friend that could watch with you and comfort you?" "Yes," she said again, and there was little trace of anger in her voice now. "I know a friend like that," I said. "Let me read you about Him."

And I then looked about for a Bible, but there was none in sight. She did not know where hers was. She had lost it. "That's all right," I said. "I know a passage. I will read it from memory. Are you from the country?" I then asked. "Yes," she said, "I am from the mountains of Virginia." "Oh," I replied, "this song was written by a man from the hills. He was a man who never got his heart out of the hills and never got the hills out of his heart." And then I read to her the song of the shepherd poet: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

We had a short prayer. And when I left her her face was wet with tears. And I had reason to believe that she was beginning to learn something of the comfort of the Great Shepherd. And when she slipped out into the Silence a few days later, she asked that I say the last words over her remains. We had become friends. She, I trust, had become a friend of Jesus. And the secret of it all was a bit of song from God's blessed old Book.

In the city of Fort Worth I went into another home.

The father and mother in the home were bitter against the Church. I tried to talk to them, but found a disposition to argue. Seeing that I was doing no good, I told the mother if she would get me the Bible I would have a word of prayer and then go. She went off and stayed quite a bit and I knew she was having trouble finding it. At last she came back with an old book. I took it and glanced through it, saw the marks of much reading in other days. There was a spot here and there on the leaf as if a tear might have fallen upon it.

I glanced up at the woman and said, "This was your father's Bible, wasn't it?" "Yes." "He was a good man, wasn't he?" "Yes," she said, and her face softened a little—"he was one of the best I ever knew." "He used to read the Book a great deal, didn't he?" "Yes, a great deal." "Dead now, isn't he?" "Yes," she answered, "dead some years." "Do you think he was saved," I asked. "Oh, of course," she said, and her voice was soft now. "Then," I replied, "maybe you would be interested to hear about the house that he is living in now, and maybe you would be interested in going there yourself sometime." And then I turned over and read that marvelous spiritual poem: "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." And the tenderness of it crept over us, and our hearts were very soft and tender as we bowed in the presence of God.

And, last of all, appreciate this Book because it is true. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." We know and are sure that the first part of this sentence is altogether true. The world does pass away. Many of its greatest nations are already dead. The gardens of yesterday are faded.

The laughter of yesterday is hushed. The world does not last. If you build your faith and hope upon things you are going to be disappointed, but the man who trusts God's Word is not going to be disappointed. Get its promises under your feet and you will stand unhurt and unshaken "amidst the crash of elements and the wreck of worlds."

See to it then that you do not allow the Bible to become for you a lost book. Whoever you are you need it. It is everybody's book. You need it in life's green spring that you may be kept from sin. For "wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way" except "by taking heed thereto according to thy Word." You need the Bible in the stern stress of life's middle passage. You need it that you may not lose your fine idealism. You need it that through its inspiration God may be able to revive His work in the midst of the years. And you need this Book to be your staff when you are doing the toilsome journey of the last mile. You need it to whisper to you even down to old age. "And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you."

And last of all, you need to hear its triumphant voice rising above the jarring discord of the falling clods upon the coffin saying,

"I am the resurrection and the life; . . .

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. . . .

"Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh grave, where is thy victory?"

Give the Bible first place among your books and your heart will burn within you as He through its pages talks with you by the way. It will become to you an

light and warmth—did it remain just the same or did it “climb to a soul in the grass and the flowers”? “It came to pass when the angels were gone”—we shall listen with interest to the next word, for it will tell us whether the visitation has been a blessing or a curse.

Now, that was a wonderful service that these shepherds had just had the opportunity of attending. I think we should count ourselves happy to be privileged to share their pews this morning and see something of what they saw and hear something of what they heard. For it was the first Christmas service ever held and the first Christmas sermon ever preached. Not only was it the first Christmas sermon, but it was the first Christian sermon as well. Millions have been preached since then and these have helped to revolutionize the thought and life of the world, but this was the first. So reverently and expectantly we enter God's house to attend the world's first Christmas service.

The sun had set. The shadows had gathered. “And in the infinite meadows of Heaven blossomed the lovely stars, the forget-me-nots of the angels.” “The honey-heavy dew of slumber” had kissed into restfulness half a troubled world. It was also the night of human history. Men's faith and hope had gone down like the setting of the sun. The purest religion of the world, the religion of the Jews, had ceased to supply wings and had become a weight, grievous to be borne. There was unity, we are told, for Rome had bound the world together with an iron band. There was peace, we are told, but it was a peace of the graveyard, for Rome's eagles had spread their black shadow over the world and their beaks were sucking the heart's blood of the world.

X Yes, it was indeed night. But the infinite bells of God's eternal purposes are chiming and the time has come for the first Christmas service. The congregation, summoned from two worlds, has assembled. The Judean hillside becomes a temple. "And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." And now the preacher is in the pulpit, a pulpit of cloud that shimmers with the light of its own presence.

The preacher that night was an angel. And I feel quite sure that in whatever exalted tasks he might have labored in the far eternities before this event, or in the centuries that have passed since—I feel confident that he never had any mission more exalted than this. I feel sure, too, that no enterprise ever brought a greater thrill of Heavenly joy to his soul.

If you are a preacher look up and thank God for it. You are in a great succession. "God had only one son," said the old divine, "and He made a preacher out of Him." He also allowed at least one angel to preach. But it is a big privilege that He has given almost solely to men. If you want the best for your child, help God to make him a preacher. If you want the highest possible for yourself, young man, offer your life to God for the work of the ministry. For preaching is the biggest thing that any angel of Heaven ever did, whatever part he may have taken in the governing of the universe or the manufacture of worlds. If you are called to preach, you have about the best job there is on this side of the stars or on the other side either.

And the sermon that night—of course we are interested to hear that, for the preacher is from a land where uncertainty gives way to certainty; where knowledge

is utterly free from the base alloy of ignorance. The preacher has been trained in the Seminary of Eternity. He has learned his theology about the steps of the Throne. He knows the mind of God. He knows the needs of men. Certainly his sermon will be worth our while.

And I am convinced too that this preacher is going to say the thing of supreme value. He is going to utter the truth that is fundamental. He is not going to allow the essential and the eternal to be buried under the rubbish of the non-essential and the temporal. He has only one opportunity to preach. This is to be his last sermon, his only chance. He will not waste it then discussing themes of the forum or the market place; he will not squander it in mere light and frivolous entertainment. As God's representative, he is bound to speak that truth that is most eternal in its weighty worthfulness.

He is going to speak. Ah, the first word: "Fear not ye." So the Gospel is not a thing of horror and of dread. It is not something to make us cringe and tremble. It is the heart's supreme courage-bringer. Over and over again the Book speaks in varied tones this message: "Do not be afraid." "Fear not"—if you had not known before where this angel was trained you would know now. "Fear not"—that is a Christ word. Again and again it is on His lips. "Fear not," He says when the storm is on and the waves are threatening to engulf the helpless little ship in the sea. "Fear not," He says to exiled John on Patmos, "for I am the living One. I am He that was dead and behold, am alive forever more." He is to be our antidote against fear amidst the tempests of sorrow, and the

storms of sin, and the perils of death, and the loneliness of that hour when we "push our tired feet into the shadows."

"Fear not, for behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy!" Did you notice those words, "glad tidings"—good news. That is what the Gospel is—news, good news. Now, people just naturally like to tell news. One man, talking to me about another, said sometime ago that his friend would be perfectly willing to die if he could only get to tell his friends about it after it had happened. He only meant that this man had a great fondness for telling news. The truth of the matter is, that he was so fond of it that if he could not get any news to tell, he would manufacture some. I have known folks like that, and so have you.

Now, people who delight in news ought to get a hold on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is news now and forever more. It is the only news that I know that remains eternally new. Other stories soon grow old; other messages soon become decrepit with age; other gospels soon lose all kinship with springtime and youth. But here is a story that never grows old. Here is a divine tree "that never sheds its leaves nor ever bids the spring adieu." Here is a winsome reality that abides unchanged amidst a changing world—

Revolutions sweep

O'er the earth, like troubled visions o'er the breast
Of dreaming sorrow; cities rise and sink
Like bubbles on the water; fiery isles
Spring, blazing, from the ocean, and go back
To their mysterious caverns; mountains rear
To heaven their bald and blackened cliffs, and bow
Their tall heads to the plain;

.

And the very stars,
Yon bright and burning blazonry of God,
Glitter awhile in their eternal depths,
And, like the Pleiades, loveliest of their train,
Shoot from their glorious spheres, and pass away
To darkle in the trackless void.

But here, I say, is a story that abides, a sermon that never grows old, a blessed life-giving truth that remains forever as fresh as the first rose of spring.

But not only is this message news, but it is good news. What a privilege to have the opportunity of always telling good news! The news we hear in this world is not always good. We live in a world where there is much bad news. Life has never been the same to you since you received that telegram a few years ago. Every word to you was a highwayman that seemed to rob you of the very treasures of your soul. Every syllable had a dagger in its hand. When there is a long distance call we are often afraid. We are frightened lest we should hear bad news. But this is good news.

Now, there is news that is good for one, but bad for another. The report of Waterloo set the bells of all England to ringing and made Wellington immortal, but it draped France in black and broke Napoleon's heart and chained him to a rock in the sea. I heard General Gordon tell of the surrender of Lee at Appomattox. He said that the officers of the Confederacy wore their dress uniforms. They would not allow anybody to know the full weight of their heartache and disappointment. Grant and his staff came with their old worn uniforms. And that they appreciated it, for it meant that the great Union general would not show joy over

the news that was good to him, but bad for his brothers in gray.

Then, there is news that is good for one and of no interest to another. Mr. Moody tells how he was to preach to the prisoners in a great penitentiary on one occasion and that the governor gave him the privilege of announcing the pardon for one of the condemned men. He said that as he stood before the great throng he held up a paper, saying, "I have a pardon here for one man." Immediately the air was so tense with interest that he was afraid to delay a single moment the announcement of the name of the man who had been pardoned. The man whose name he announced came forward with ill-concealed joy in his face, but upon the faces of hundreds of others despair settled. Some shoulders drooped and some buried their faces in their hands and sobbed. Good news for one, but not good for hundreds of others.

But the angel says this is good news for everybody. It is good news for the rich and the poor. It is good news for the wise and the unwise, for the learned and for the ignorant. It is especially good news for the beggar, for the handicapped, for the outcast. It is good news for the man that is at the rear of the procession. The helpless, the crippled, the blind, were junked in those days. They were thrown away onto the rubbish heap. We care for them today and make life tolerable for them because Jesus came.

In the House of Too Much Trouble

There lived a little boy;

He was eager for a playmate,

He was hungry for a toy.

But 'twas always too much trouble,
 Too much worry, too much noise;
 For the House of Too Much Trouble
 Wasn't meant for little boys.

Sometimes the little fellow left
 A book upon the floor;
 He forgot and laughed too loudly,
 Or he failed to close the door.
 In the House of Too Much Trouble
 Things must be precise and trim.
 In the House of Too Much Trouble
 There was little room for him.

So he never had a playmate,
 And he never owned a pet.
 In the House of Too Much Trouble
 Things are trim and quiet yet.

Every room is set in order,
 Every book is in its place,
 And the lonely little fellow
 Wears a smile upon his face.
 In the House of Too Much Trouble
 He is quiet and at rest.
 In the House of Too Much Trouble,
 With a lily on his breast.

Above all else, it is good news for the children. The ancient world had no conception of the value of childhood. We never knew how to appreciate the cradle till God's Son was rocked in it. In the heathen world today children do not count. Two hundred and fifty million children die in China every generation. And unless conditions have changed in very recent years, there is in that whole land not a single tomb to a child.

And the ancient world was one great, big, grim House of Too Much Trouble. But a million little cheeks will bloom with joy roses at this Christmastide, and a million little eyes will sparkle with Heavenly happiness, because Jesus has come. It is good news for everybody. But above all else, it is good news for the sweetest gift that God ever gave to men—it is good news for the little child.

Now, what is this news that is good for everybody? Some of us would never guess. Some do not even believe it when they are told. But I feel sure that this angel messenger, speaking for God and from God, knew whereof he spoke. And the good news he had to tell was just this: "There is born unto you this day, in the city of David, a Savior, Christ the Lord."

A Savior—"Ah," says the moralist, as he settles back in his disappointment, "I am so sorry to hear that. I expected something far better. I expected something that I really need, but a Savior—that is out of my line. I fast twice in a week. I give tithes of all that I possess. I thank God that I am not as other men. I am good enough without a Savior."

No, He is the supremest need. That is true for the simple reason that "there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." I have said this before; I can not say it too often. And when I say it I speak home to the deepest convictions of every unspoiled man's soul. So that of all the stories ever told, of all the messages ever brought to men, none is so precious and none is so much needed as this: "There is born unto you a Savior, Christ the Lord." There is One who is able to unhitch you from

your soiled and wasted past. There is only One, and none other who is able to say, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow."

I heard of a man some time ago who was so given to praising the Lord aloud that one of the officers of the church took him home with him to speak to him about it. And on the way home he praised the Lord. And when he got there he led him into a room and gave him a physical geography to read. And he said to himself, "Now I suppose you won't get anything to praise God for from that." But he had not left him alone long till he heard him again shouting, "Praise the Lord!" And in his amazement he went to him and asked him what the matter was. And the old saint told him that he had just read where the sea was five miles deep and he remembered that the Lord had said, "I will cast your sins into the bottom of the sea," and that he liked to think that his sins were so far away from him.

The sermon ended. The choir rose to sing, the choir from a Land where everybody sings; where there is music in every passing breeze; where the tuneless ones have become songful; where the voiceless ones and those who died choked with consumption, have their tongues tuned to make music sweeter than all earth's song birds. And the song they sang was a song that at once was a prophecy and a promise—peace and good will. And today there is turmoil and contention, and it does seem at times that the song that the angels sang is taking a long time for its realization. And yet it is coming closer. There is much hate in the world today, and yet I doubt if the spirit of love and of

brotherhood was ever quite so strong. I doubt if there were ever more who are willing to give themselves to deeds of kindly service for others.

Then the music hushed, and the light faded, and stillness and night reigned once more on the Judean hills. And now is the hour of crisis. They have heard the story. What will they do with it? They have listened to the song. What will it mean in their own individual lives? They have attended the service. Will the light that they have seen lead them to greater light, or will it only make the shadows about them the blacker? Will the warmth of heart that they have felt bring in a full summertime, or will it little by little chill into bleak and abiding winter? What will they do with the truth that has been made known unto them?

"Let us go," said the shepherds. That was the saving word—"Let us put our Gospel to the test. Let us by obedience transform hearsay into the fine gold of experience." And you know that when they put the angel's story to the test that they found Jesus. And that was better than seeing the angels and that was better than hearing Heaven's choir. That was better than all else in Heaven or earth—they found Jesus.

Suppose they had only speculated about it. Suppose, worse still, they had quarreled about the different interpretations of it, but had never really gone to see. And now years have gone by and one of them, who was but a youth then, is an old grandfather. And a lad, his grandson, is on his knee, and he is telling the lad the most wonderful story ever told. It is about the angel's sermon and the angels' song. And he said, "A long, long time ago, when I was little more than a boy, I was out on the Judean hills one night with some

other shepherds, keeping watch over the flock. 'And the angel of the Lord came upon us and the glory of the Lord shone round about us. And we were sore afraid.' But the angel said, 'Fear not, for behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, for there is born unto you this day, in the city of David, a Savior, Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the Child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the Heavenly Host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.' "

And the story ended there. The old man's lips cease to move, and there is silence. Then the lad turns and looks with wide, puzzled eyes into his grandfather's face and says, "But Granddaddy, is that all? What did you do when you heard the good news? Was what the angels said really true? Was the Christ Child ever really born? Did God in the form of a little baby ever really come to live among men?"

And the old shepherd sadly shakes his white head and answers, "I never knew. I never went to see. Some say that it is all a myth. Others say that it is all true, that they themselves saw the Christ Child. But for me, I could never be quite sure. I never did go to see."

Suppose your child were to ask you that question: "Is it really true?" Suppose your friend were to ask you. If so, what is the evidence of its truth? I will ask the shepherd—"The angel told you a wonderful story—was it true?" And he doesn't shake his head, but with a fine joy in his face he says, "Yes, it is true, every word." And I say, "How do you know?" And he says, "I know because I went to see. I put the

matter to the test and I found the Christ Child. Yes, I found God, disguised though He was by the surroundings, disguised though He was by the weakness of the little baby house in which He lived—yet I found God. I know it is true.”

XX Yes, the blessed fact is that they came with haste and found, as millions have found since then, that the old story is true. That is the reason it is such a glorious privilege to tell it—

I love to tell the story
Of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and His glory,
Of Jesus and His love;
I love to tell the story,
Because I know 'tis true;
It satisfies my longings,
As nothing else can do.

I love to tell the story;
For those who know it best
Seem hungering and thirsting
To hear it like the rest.
And when, in scenes of glory,
I sing the new, new song,
'Twill be the old, old story
That I have loved so long.

And not only did these shepherds find the Christ, but in finding Him they found, as every man finds, a new life. They returned praising God. They returned eagerly telling their friends the wonderful revelation that had come to themselves. What does it mean? Just this: The old, old, ever new miracle that finding Jesus, they had found the Christmas spirit, the spirit of Christ, the spirit which means not getting, but giv-

ing. If this story has become true to your own experience, the other part will be true also. You will go forth from the service with the Christmas spirit. You will be trying to do all the year round what Jesus is eternally doing, and that is giving.

I well remember the first Christmas tree that I ever attended. It was in the old village church. That rude little building seemed to me like a wonderful temple. The Christmas tree seemed a veritable giant of the forest. The presents were to me wonderful beyond all my dreams. Many names were called, mine among others, and presents were being showered all around. But there was one young fellow, almost an idiot, standing by the tree and looking at it with eager eyes, whose name had not been called. At last old Santa Claus took down the largest box on the tree and called his name. A look almost of radiance came into his stupid face and he held out eager hands for the prize. With nervous fingers he untied the string and opened it, and then his expectation gave place to despair. It was empty, absolutely empty. Some young fellow mistaking a tragedy for a joke, had given him an empty box.

X We are hanging presents upon the world's great Christmas tree, each of us, and the presents we hang are the lives we live. Some of us are hanging empty lives; some of us lives full of self and sin. Our privilege is this, to hang a life so full of Christ, that those who come closest to us will take knowledge of us, that we have been with Him. And doing this, our gift to the world will be in our finite way the gift that Christ made, the gift that God made, even Christ Himself.

THE NEGLECTED GARDEN

PROVERBS, 24: 30-31

"I passed by the field of the sluggard. . . .

"And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down."

This is a very realistic picture, one that the least imaginative of us can easily see. Here is the way the modern wise man would tell it: "I was out walking the other day. I passed along a winding country road on either side of which was the loveliest of farm land. There were fields of waving corn; there were golden seas of wheat and oats. There were beautiful gardens where the magnolias blossomed and where a myriad roses spilled out their perfume, and where violets, hyacinths and pansies lifted up their modest, winsome faces.

"Suddenly I came to a spot that was a blot on the landscape. It was an old waste garden, untilled, unworked, uncared for. I did not enter through the gate, but stepped over the broken wall. I had taken but a few steps when suddenly there was a stinging pain in my ankles, and I looked down and saw the place was thick with nettles. A few steps further and something pricked me through my shoe, and I discovered also a luxuriant growth of thorns. And that was all the vegetable life I saw—thorns and nettles and noxious weeds in which doubtless poisonous serpents homed and hissed.

"As I was preparing to hurry away I discovered a miserable tumbledown cabin that looked out upon this neglected garden. In the door of this cabin there sat a man bearing the marks of decay and of neglect quite as evident as those of the garden itself. His face was sallow, his figure stooped, his eyes weak and watery, his mouth half open—the tell-tale sign of a flabby and wasted will.

"I could not but speak to him: 'Hello, old man! How goes it?' 'Bad enough, bad enough,' he said with a yawn. 'The capitalists have got everything today. A poor fellow like me has no chance.' 'The summer is pretty well over, isn't it?' With a yawn he nodded his reply. 'Time for raising crops about passed?' Again he yawned an affirmative. 'Where is your crop?' I said. 'Got none.' Then I asked him why. 'You have failed,' I said, 'haven't you?' And he acknowledged that he had. And wanting to learn, I put my question again: 'Why have you failed?'

"Why had he failed? It was not because he did not have any garden. If he could have replied, 'God gave other men a chance, but He gave me none. Other men had fields to work—I had none'—but he could not say that. He had a garden, just as you have, and just as I have. Every man is born into the world with his own garden spot. That garden spot is himself, his undeveloped character, his ungrown personality. We come with a soul blank as an unwritten piece of paper. We have the privilege of writing either the good or the bad. We have our gardens, each of us. We may do with them in large measure what we will."

Nor did this man fail because his garden was lacking in fertility. He could not say that. Had he said it,

I might have pointed to the luxurious nettles and the ripe thorns. Any garden that will grow rank weeds and thorns and nettles will also grow wheat and corn and flowers. Any man with large capacities in him for evil may have also, through the grace of God, large capacities for good.

No, he did not fail because his garden had no possibilities of good in it, nor because God had suddenly blotted the sun out of his sky or withheld the rain. God had done none of these things. Nettles and thorns require sunlight and rain, just as flowers do. God had done His part, but this man had used the fertility of the soil, the warmth of the sunshine and the moisture of the rain for the making of thorns instead of for the growing of roses.

Nor did the man fail because he had a bad environment. True, he was to grow his crop in a world where there were enemies. He was to cultivate his garden in the presence of many a foe, but you will notice that there was a stone wall about the garden, a stone wall that he had allowed to fall down, but that he might have kept up if he had so desired. No, this man's enemies did not prevent his making a success. If you will, you can so fence your life through the power of God that you can keep out of it what you will. Not even God can break down the walls to get into your garden if you object to His coming. All He does at your garden gate is to stand and knock.

Then, if this man did not fail for lack of a garden nor because the garden had no fertility, if he did not fail because the beasts trampled down the flowers and ate up the tender plants—why did he fail? Just one reason, he failed through pure, unmitigated, unadulter-

ated laziness. He failed because he would not work. He had a genuine aversion to work. He did not like to strain his muscles. He did not want to quicken his pulse beat. He hated to get any corns in his palms. He feared to bring a bead of perspiration to his brow. And remember laziness is one of the greatest soul wreckers, one of the greatest character killers that is operating in the world today. It is a foe that we must meet and grapple with and overcome, if we are to be of any value to God, to society or to ourselves. It is an enemy that we must conquer if life is to be worth while either here or hereafter.

Now, the first fact I want to present to you is this. that it is every man's duty to be one of the world's workers. This is as true of women as it is of men. It is as true of the wise as it is of the unwise. It is as true of the rich as it is of the poor. Everybody ought to work because it is nothing less than our common duty. It is true because it is what we owe to God and to society. What Paul said of himself is true of every man—"We are debtors."

The first question we ask about every piece of machinery is, What is it for? If it can not give a reason for its existence in terms of service or usefulness it has no place in the program of the world. It is the question we ask about every creature, and that creature that can not give an answer in terms of service is ostracized. We make war against him. That is the reason we fight the house fly and the mosquito and the flea. They take without giving. They live for themselves.

And the recognition of this fact of obligation marks the dawn of moral manhood. We expect of babies that they should be self-centered. All children are essen-

tially selfish, but with the coming of a larger maturity we expect them to change from mere getters into givers. We expect this of them whether they are rich or poor. For no amount of wealth gives any man the moral privilege, the moral right to be a drone, a bunch of mistletoe, a parasite. Every self-respecting man and woman must be a contributor. He must be one of the world's workers. He must do this because it is nothing more than what he ought to do.

Every man must be one of the world's workers, in the second place, because it is the only path to real self-development. It is the only way you can come to be your best self. The young fellow that is too lazy to work is too lazy to be a man. Possibly the most contemptible character in all Shakespeare is the young fellow who said, "But for these vile guns I would have been a soldier." But for this vile work many of us would have been worth while men and women. Many of us would have gone to the head of the firm, but we never came to our best because we were too lazy.

I saw a letter from a young fellow sometime ago saying that he wanted an easier job and better pay; that the one that he had at present caused him to have to lift a good deal and also that it got him dirty. He wanted a job where there was no lifting and where he could stay clean. A job of inheriting estates was something after his mind. He might have consented to sell bonbons to young ladies between the ages of sixteen and twenty. But the good job will never come to him because he will never do the hard work that will fit him for it.

It is only by work, I say, that you really find yourself. How is it that almost all the leaders in the world

today were once poor? How is it that so few sons of the rich ever amount to anything? From the simple fact that they do not have to do enough work to make them men. And soul wealth can not be inherited—the rich coin of character must be minted by your own self. The choice flowers of moral worth must be grown in your own garden.

Every man must be a worker, in the third place, because it is the only way to win success. I know that there is a specious sort of success that comes through the chances of the stock market and the gambling table. But that is a success that is always dangerous and disappointing. Real success is not a result of chance or of luck, but of work. And real hard work will achieve when everything else fails. I was reading the other day of a young fellow who started a jewelry store in a refrigerator. He is a man of wealth today, not through chance, but hard work. I have a friend who once was a member of my church. The first six months his salary was \$30. He gave a tenth of that to the Lord. Sixteen years from that date he showed his pastor his financial statement for the year and it was \$86,000. Work wins temporal success.

Work also wins spiritual success. We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Why is it that so many in the church are failures religiously? It is not because Jesus Christ can not do what He claims to do. It is not because the Gospel has lost its power. It is simply because of our moral laziness. We claim to be Christians, and yet we do not give five earnest, honest minutes a day to working at the job. We claim to be Christians and go for days without ever a look into God's Word to learn His will. We claim

to be Christians and live in utter neglect of prayer, the prayer that takes time and energy and means work. We claim to be Christians and are too morally lazy to identify ourselves with the church where we are and to witness for Christ in the crowd in which we move. We utterly refuse to make a business of our religion and then wonder why it is that there is no vitality in it. We yield utterly to our laziness and then complain that we do not enjoy a sense of the divine presence and have not the vital grip of Christ that we once had. Being a Christian is not a matter of magic. It is a matter of vital, earnest, energetic, consecrated work. And if you are too lazy to work you are too lazy to be God's man and God's woman. If you are too lazy to work at your job religiously you are too lazy to be a blessing. Every blessing that comes to this world comes as a result of somebody's earnest, self-giving toil.

Look what laziness did for this man. In the first place, it kept him from raising a crop. It kept him from cultivating his garden. It held him back from the realization of his possibilities. He might have raised a wealth of roses. The breath of the sweetness of his garden might have been wafted on all winds. His corn and wheat might have made thews of strength for other toilers. But he raised no flowers, and there was no corn and no wheat. He failed, as some of you are failing, not because he could not, but because he would not.

I am speaking to some tonight who have wonderful possibilities in their lives. You could do almost any high and holy task to which you would set yourself. You could be a blessing to the crowd in which you

move. You could be a rare and helpful benediction to the church. You could live a life whose influence would be sweeter and more wholesome than the perfume of rare flowers. Why are you not doing it? Because it is too much trouble. You are unwilling to work at the task.

The second result of this man's laziness was that he not only raised no crop, but his garden produced a harvest of noxious weeds. This was not the case because the sluggard deliberately determined that he would raise a harvest of thorns and nettles. It was not the case because he deliberately decided that he would be an enemy to himself and to his race. It was the case for the simple reason that he refused to set himself energetically to the task of raising flowers.

I know what he decided. He decided that he would raise nothing at all, that he would let his life lie barren; that while he would not be a positive Christian, he would not be positively un-Christian; while he would not be aggressively good, he certainly would not be aggressively bad. But he found, as all men find, that this is impossible. Nature abhors a vacuum. The only power that can keep evil out of your life is good. If you are not going to fulfill the lust of the flesh you must walk in the Spirit.

Do you remember how Silas Marner was saved from his love of gold? He was not saved from it by having his gold stolen. Robbed he was, but he loved money just as tragically when he was penniless as he did when he had all his gold securely hidden away. How was he cured? One night he came in from the snowy out-of-doors. As he entered the room he saw something on the hearth that shimmered and glittered in the flare of

the light. His heart beat wildly. He sprang forward in eager expectation. He thought that his gold had come back. And he got down on his knees to run his fingers through it and hear the music of it once more. But his fingers did not find his gold. He ran them instead through the silken tresses of a little girl that lay asleep in the warmth of his fire. In the after days Eppie stole little by little into his heart. By and by that once cold and narrow heart became so full of love for this little girl that there was no room for the old love any more. It was thus that the evil of a love for gold was overcome by the good of a warm, tender human love.

That is what Jesus meant when He said, "He that is not for me is against me." That is what He meant when He said, "No man can serve two masters." You can not take a negative attitude toward the great fact of God and the right. If you refuse to be a positive Christian, then by that very refusal you become a positive evil. Refuse to cultivate your garden and weeds will grow there without any effort on your part. For it takes no positive effort to lead a wrong and worthless and useless life. You can raise weeds with very flabby muscles. You can grow a harvest of thorns with very tender palms. You can gravitate inevitably toward hell without ever getting a bead of sweat upon your face. In order for my life to be wasted, in order for the garden of my soul to become infested with thorns and weeds, it is not necessary for me to sow them there. It is not necessary for me to protect them and to watch over their growth. All that is necessary for me to do is to let them alone. What must I do to be saved? I must give myself energetically to the task. What must

I do to be lost? Nothing—bare, naked nothing. There is no way more common and there is no way more sure. For a man who begins by the cultivation of no right crop always ends by the harvesting of a wrong.

Not only does laziness rob us of a harvest of food and flowers and give us a harvest of evil, but it tends more and more toward complete moral disintegration. It breaks down the fences of life. It changes life's garden into a common. If my life is to mean anything, the fences must be kept up round it. That is, there are certain things that must be kept out as well as certain things fenced in. There are sins in your life tonight that were not in it one year ago. What does it mean? You allowed your fences to be broken down. How did Daniel succeed? He fenced himself in with an energetic purpose. What was the secret of the victory of Joseph? He threw an earnest moral principle round his life.

How about your garden? In your indifference and your idleness and your moral laziness, have you allowed the fences to fall down? Has it become a galloping ground of every form of sin and worldliness that desires to enter in? Is it a spot made common by all unhallowed, unholy feet, or is it a sacred place for the indwelling of the King of Kings?

Do you remember the two girls of whom James Lane Allen speaks? One, he said, was like a peach that grew at the top of a tree. It was protected by its great height. It caught the first kiss of the morning sun and held its last caress at eventide. It was impossible to obtain it without a climb. The other, he said, was like a bunch of grapes that hung above a common path. Everybody who passed took a grape.

What is your life? Is it a garden or is it a common? Are you growing flowers or are you growing thorns? It is for you to decide. None can decide it but yourself. "One day," the text tells us, "want and poverty are going to spring upon us as robbers"; that is, if we refuse to toil honestly at our task, we are going to find ourselves poor not simply for this world, but poverty stricken wretches to all eternity. What must you do to raise weeds and thorns? What must you do to be a curse? What must you do to be a menace to society? What must you do to breathe an atmosphere of poison in the circle in which you move? Answer: nothing.

What must you do in order to succeed, to succeed in your daily task, to succeed at this supreme task of the cultivation of your own soul garden? How may you be a blessing? How did Dempsey learn to fight? He worked at it. How did Sir Walter Scott learn to write? He worked at his job. How will you learn to be a Christian? How shall you cultivate in the finest possible way the garden of your soul? How will you help this world, sweeten society and push it a little closer toward God? There is just one way—you must work at it. Will you begin now?

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